Adorno on Hegel and History

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I, Helena Cicmil, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

Abstract

Adorno's ideas about history lead us in myriad directions. It is also one of the topics wherein Hegel features for Adorno both as a figure to be overcome and as a figure from whom to learn. Commentators continue to critically examine these issues. This thesis offers an interpretation of Adorno's treatment of history in his conception of our epistemic limits and potential. I examine how Adorno draws on Hegel in his critique of conceptual thought and its relationship to socio-historical factors. I claim that this critique justifies Adorno's demands for philosophers to engage in historical investigation and for a mode of thinking that prioritises the object. I then demonstrate how these might both be achieved through Adorno's notion of constellations.

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I. Introduction

1. Adorno's Search for Distance

In his *History and Freedom* lectures (*HF*), Adorno argues that to adequately think about the past, we need to

> keep at a certain distance. This will enable us both to dissociate ourselves from a total theory of history and equally to resist the cult of the facts which [...] have their own conceptual difficulties. (*HF* 11-12; see also 21)

Several questions arise here. Firstly, we might want to ask: 'Why?' and 'How?'. We surely need to know why philosophers ought to engage with history at all. We also need to know what the conditions are, whether positive or negative, that our approach must fulfil. Even if Adorno is not offering a blueprint, but presenting the approach in action, we still need some justification for it.

One answer to the first is that Adorno is not just interested in philosophers, but in urging historians to alter their methods for their own purposes of investigating the past. This means, if Adorno's criticisms are justified, philosophy has a role to play in assessing historical method. However, Adorno also challenges the divide between history and philosophy. This means philosophy must, or is led to, think about history and/or investigate the past. Some of the working parts of

why Adorno thinks this is the case will emerge below, as we address the second question: 'How?'.

Adorno offers negative conditions for this sought-after distance (or middle ground), through criticising what he considers two extremes of historical investigation. These have different objectives as well as modes of investigation, so how Adorno contrasts them with one another reveals much about his own intentions and presuppositions. Outlining this will serve to demarcate the ideas that this thesis engages with. I will then clarify the way in which Adorno's complex relation to Hegel will be approached. With this in place, I will summarise how the following chapters will address the aims of the thesis.

i. Cult of the Facts

With the term 'cult of the facts', Adorno has in mind positivist, scientistic traditions of socio-historical enquiry who aim to, put simply, find out what happened and why. Adorno characterises these historians as striving to do history without "philosophical interpretation" (*HF* 40); they regard history "as an assemblage of facts" (*HF* 19), of individual things occurring and interacting causally, and consider them accessible to our knowledge if we occupy an objective, systematic stance, and take what is given prior to any value-laden interpretation. This focus on "mere facticity", "mere immediacy" (*HF* 19), aims to establish what an eye-witness might narrate.

Adorno argues that no history can avoid presupposing a theory of history, even if it claims to do so:

> This overweighting of the factual itself presupposes a theory that historical processes have some sort of meaning which then identifies its nodal points or crises in such *événements*. (*HF* 11)

Adorno is pointing out that a historian's choice of object is already value-laden and implies a theory about what is significant to history and to human knowledge. Moreover, once the positivist historian's object is identified, the context is then "indirect, derived" (*HF* 19). It is discovered or considered in relation to the object; the historian will have predetermined what to look at in the context. In Adorno's view, the meaning and content of our object (the event, experience, custom, trend, social, political or legal phenomena) should adjust when we adequately reflect on its context. I will examine why in the course of this thesis.

According to Adorno, assuming that objectivity can be achieved in this way contributes to a false mode of knowledge and thinking (identity-thinking, as will be examined in Chapters II and III), which accepts what Adorno thinks is an error: that our concepts capture our objects, that the social world can be understood systematically. For Adorno, this perpetuates a pervasive problem in society, which he conceives of as the link between rationality and domination. While, Adorno thinks, positivists suppose there are universal truths about how society works, Adorno claims different eras are qualitatively different, and historical events engender change in ways the positivists' formal categories disguise (*HF* 32). The claims, then, are that philosophical interpretation of history (having a theory of history) is unavoidable, but also desirable (as opposed to giving up on history), that Adorno is committed to at least some notion of what makes different historical contexts relevantly different, and that concepts and universals should be viewed with suspicion.

ii. Total Theories of History

> The question we must ask [...] is whether a theory of history is
> possible without a latent idealism; whether we can construct
> history without committing the cardinal sin of insinuating
> meaning where none exists. (*HF* 9)

To some degree, Adorno shares commitments with many of the
theories of history he identifies as 'total': the importance for philosophy
to think about history; limitations to the possibility of objectivity in
understanding the social present and past; examining how human
thought changes over history. What classifies them as 'total', such that
they represent another extreme from 'cult of the facts'?

Adorno is interested in German Idealist theories of history (particularly
Kant and Hegel), but he implicates Marx and Engels, and cultural
relativism (such as Spengler's). The German idealists' philosophies of
history are generally constructions of a universal history, considering
history as a unified whole[1]. They generally ascribe teleology to history,
and relate it to the realisation of reason, freedom and the good. These
theories tend to identify certain stages in history as significant for the
development of humanity according to those categories. For example,
Kant argued that humanity had entered an age of Enlightenment, of
maturity, in which we could fully exercise the autonomy and freedom
that comes with the universal rational faculty he argues we have (Kant
1784a, 1784b; see *HF* 5). For Hegel, world history is the development of
self-consciousness, absolute spirit (*Geist*), which is constitutive of
reason and freedom; history is propelled by the cunning of reason;
briefly put, each culture has a stage of rational development and

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[1] Further discussion in O'Connor and Mohr, eds. 2006: on Kant 283-5; Schelling
296-7; Fichte 309-311.

self-consciousness, which will eventually find contradictions in its ideas and move to a new, higher stage of reason, freedom and the good (Hegel, 1840).

For Adorno, these theories are too abstracted from reality; he accuses them of postulating the meaning[2] of history "over and above the facts" (*HF* 4). Adorno uses the facts of (or rather his approach to interpreting) human suffering and domination to challenge their ideas that history is in our universal interest (*HF* 44). Moreover, as we will see in Chapters II and III, Adorno argues that our rationality relies on us being irrational (we follow reasons which in fact actively block off that which our reasoning hopes or claims to know) and that this precludes reading history as rational. I will examine how these lines of criticism work, in relation to Hegel, in order to then examine why Adorno, claiming to be influenced by Hegel's ideas on how the course of history changes human thought, consciousness and modes of experience (*HF* 25), takes Hegel to be making a mistake on his own terms.

It is worth highlighting three points that Adorno makes about Spengler here, as they provide negative conditions for the required distance. Firstly, although Spengler does not construct a universal history in the ways just described, Adorno accuses him of being idealist: Adorno reads Spengler as arguing that cultures have a unity, a unique soul with which each person is harmonious because they internally produce it (*HF* 8-9). This is something Adorno rejects, because, as we will see, he argues there is disharmony and antagonism within the relationship between thought and culture. Secondly, as will become clear through Adorno's critique of conceptual thought, Adorno rejects that truth essentially is what a culture takes it to be (see Spengler, 1926:41)[3].

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[2] Nevertheless, Adorno is still engaged in questions that imply history is meaningful; it means something to us.

[3] As O'Connor helpfully puts it, the critique of philosophy and thus of "rationality in the broader sense [...] would be otiose were different philosophical systems and their

There is something significant about the (instrumental) rationality of the (generally Western) cultures under consideration that points to unfulfilled, or missing, potential for responding genuinely rationally or truthfully, to the world. Thirdly, in 'Was Spengler Right?', Adorno notes Spengler had correct intuitions about the self-destruction of Western society (1966b:25) and predictions about mass culture (1966b:28-9). However, Adorno claims Spengler's critique viewed human history as destined to fate. This tells us that Adorno's own diagnosis of our theoretical weakness is not a resignation to fate, even though he claims we cannot conceive of a possibility to overcome it (see Chapters II and III). Nor does Adorno have a declinist theory of history, as O'Connor (2014:228) and Allen (2014:20) observe.

Adorno implies that Marxist approaches of history (dialectical materialism) are ultimately 'total' theories, for reading necessity and universal interest into human history. However, Adorno's imperative to assume the right distance when thinking about the past echoes Marx and Engels' program for a philosophical approach to history that was neither "a collection of dead facts as [...] with the empiricists, or an imagined activity of imagined subjects, as with the idealist" (1846:181). Philosophy, they claimed, needed to make abstractions from historical material, which helps to arrange it, but must always be ready for historical material to challenge those abstractions (ibid.). As we will see, the approach we can find in Adorno follows this rule. Moreover, Adorno's criticism that Hegel writes "his philosophical history from the standpoint of the victor [...and] ends up adopting a class standpoint" (*HF* 41) is famously made by Marx and Engels. However, dialectical materialists argue that the passage of history through our modes of production was necessary for the creation of the material conditions for the proletariat's freedom (Lukács, 1923: 'What is Orthodox Marxism?').

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determining rationalities nothing other than incommensurable normativities" (2004:13).

In Adorno's view, they, like the German Idealists, are mistaken in reading "a semblance of justice" (*HF* 51) into a history of domination and class antagonism (*HF* 44). In part, Adorno's criticism comes from his rejection of the view that understanding class relations is sufficient for understanding social domination[4] and that there are signs of growing awareness of domination, which tells us Adorno also orients the place of history in philosophy towards identifying, and focusing on the roots of, domination. This involves, for Adorno, re-examining the relationship between capitalism and our modes of thought. Adorno claims that Hegel helps achieve this. To make this claim, Adorno must be appealing to an idea in Hegel that he considers separable from those he rejects, about necessity and universal interest playing out in history.

In summary, both the 'cult of the facts' and total theories of history are flawed approaches to history because each fails to acknowledge several of the following:

1. There is a problem with conceptual thought.
2. Oppression and domination need closer attention.
3. Individuals and society are in some way mutually conditioning.
4. We cannot ascribe necessity, universal interest or meaning to history as a whole.
5. We cannot ascribe *no* meaning to history.

We can infer that these claims would be respected in Adorno's middle ground approach to history. I will examine what these claims involve for Adorno and how his critique of Hegel explains them.

Given the complexities of Adorno's epistemological ideas and his relation to Hegel, I will now outline the scope of my engagement.

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[4] We will see why in Chapter II, Section 3

2. Approaching Adorno on Hegel

Adorno makes plain that he wants to criticise the nature of our thought and reasoning, which involves criticising our use of concepts (universals). It is clear he seeks to condemn the discipline of epistemology as a whole, for in various ways affirming our problematic mode of thinking (identity-thinking). However, the precise nature of these criticisms is sometimes less clear. Adorno emphasises that his engagement with epistemology is not for the purpose of putting forward a competing positive theory of truth or knowledge. Yet, however negative and critical, Adorno commits to certain claims about how conceptual thought works. These claims elucidate his social critique ("Critique of society is critique of knowledge, and vice versa" (Adorno, 1969a:250)), his ideas about philosophy's limits, and his understanding of the course of history. For the purposes of this thesis, I will investigate how Adorno's critique of identity-thinking is supported by his use of Hegel and how they relate to socio-historical considerations.

I suggested in Section 1 above that despite Hegel falling under the 'total theories of history' camp, Adorno claims to be influenced by Hegel on several of his stated positions.

Adorno's preoccupation with Hegel permeates his work. He makes polemical claims, accusing all thinkers of having regressed since Hegel; his opponents and supporters alike (Adorno, 1963:4). For Adorno, there is a historicised need to turn to Hegel: he writes, "contemporary consciousness finds in Hegel a truth content whose time is due" (Adorno, 1963:55-6). Commentators agree Adorno's discussion of

Hegel is multifaceted and presents interpretational difficulties[5]. We can identify several voices, not always harmonious, interplaying:

1. Adorno, as a Western Marxist thinker, criticising Hegel.
2. Adorno criticising further ideas of Hegel retained by Marxism (for example, the idea of a logical resolution to history's contradictions).
3. Adorno praising and using Hegel, because Marxism got wrong or omitted important ideas. Adorno's arguments in this camp help explain why he considers some of his arguments in 1, 2 (above) and 4 (below) to be internal criticisms of Hegel[6].
4. Adorno rejecting Hegel at the abstract level, dismantling his epistemology, logic and metaphysics.

I will mainly focus on 3 in this thesis, to examine Adorno's claims that he is influenced by Hegel's epistemology and ideas about the epistemic subject's relationship to society and history (*ND*:200; Adorno, 1963:9, 18). I will try to examine, from Adorno's standpoint, parts of his engagement with Hegel, rather than Hegel on his own terms. This means largely putting aside the evaluation of the justice of Adorno's critique of Hegel from Hegel's point of view[7]. As such, the strength of the claims I ascribe to Adorno are qualified by these limitations. I do, however, aim to highlight these problems.

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[5] Baumann, 2011; Finlayson, 2015; O'Connor, 2004; Rose, 2014:72-79; Stone, 2014b.
[6] Adorno claims negativity is at the heart of Hegel's philosophy, that the thesis of positivity was a mistake, that Hegel's immanent critical spirit, dialectics, understanding of mediation and the empirical subject as social, must be rescued from his conservatism, doctrine of affirmation and reconciliation (e.g. Adorno, 1963:30 and *ND* 161).
[7] Adorno acknowledges that criticising any one part of Hegel's systematic philosophy will face the charge that there are detailed justifications available in Hegel, and the charge that no part can be accepted without the whole. However, he argues that to "honor Hegel" (i.e. to recover any valid implicit or explicit ideas) means to challenge this wholeness and systematicity (Adorno, 1963:2).

Among the reasons for Adorno's engagement with Hegel during the decades after writing the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (*DE*) in 1944, one might be that Adorno considered the *DE* an insufficient critique of Hegel; *DE* elicits a response from Hegel since he was interested in similar questions about enlightenment rationality and the challenge in the *DE* is one he considers. We might consider that Adorno regards further reflection on the method of the *DE* to be necessary, in its approach to history and to critiquing conceptual thought, which Hegel provides tools for[8]. I will aim to see what these tools or ideas are.

We can distinguish Adorno's ideas about history that have arisen here, into these elements:

(a) *Descriptive[9] claims about philosophy and history*:

   (i)   Philosophy (and history; indeed, all areas of investigation and knowledge) faces epistemic limitations related to concept-use.

   (ii)   There is a relationship between historical factors and epistemic (im)possibilities.

(b) *Prescriptive claims about philosophy and history*:

   (i)   Philosophy in general must be mindful of (a)(i) and (ii).

   (ii)   History interpretation and writing[10] has a place in the goals of philosophy; a middle ground is needed.

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[8] I acknowledge that my framing of Adorno's relation to Hegel, and how I proceed is not the only, or necessarily the best, way. Adorno's ideas on Hegel span a vast range of topics, and I do not purport, in this thesis, to cover all the ways in which Hegel can be said to influence Adorno. I will focus on how Hegel helps carve out an argument that takes us from Adorno's identity-thinking to a plausible conception of what it means for us to be historical, and then, how this supports Adorno's arguments for prioritising the object in thought, and for historical method.

[9] This descriptive/prescriptive distinction is not completely accurate, since the very way in which Adorno makes the claims I've listed under (a) already involves undertaking (b) to some extent. However, I hope taking this approach can help us distinguish and tackle some of the issues at stake.

[10] Adorno claims this would involve philosophically understanding and interpreting historical events as well as history-writing in the process (*HF*:40).

This thesis hopes to show that through investigating (a) in relation to Hegel, Adorno's notion of constellations can be defended as a plausible approach to fulfil and explain (b)[11].

In Chapter II, I set out some key aspects of Adorno's critique of identity-thinking, which raises questions about how conceptual thought relates to socio-historical factors. In Chapter III, I suggest we can understand Adorno's claims that Hegel contributes to these ideas, by focusing on subject-object mediation, language, and the interplay between contingency and the development of norms in society. In places, I will compare Adorno's discussion of Hegel with Robert Brandom's. We will then turn to examining Adorno's claims about the necessity and origins of identity-thinking. These examinations should justify Adorno's interest in understanding history (both the need to do it, and his critique of other approaches), and his claim that Hegel teaches that philosophy faces restrictions, but must try to express what our concepts suppress.

In Chapter IV, I will critically examine Adorno's notion of constellations as an alternative philosophical approach to identity-thinking that helps address the need for expression and search for historical method. This will involve analysing the role constellations have for different objects of cognition, and studying Adorno's relation to Max Weber. This examination will develop Adorno's views on what it means to philosophise historically (to examine objects of experience, historically) and on method in history.

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[11] I hope that doing so can contribute to ongoing conversations in the scholarship about Adorno's ambivalent relation to Hegel, and the place of historical understanding in a philosophy that defines itself as critical.

In Chapter V, I ask whether Adorno offers anything more to satisfy his own demand to prioritise the individual in history and lend a voice to suffering. I also examine how this investigation as a whole might defend Adorno against a criticism that he needs to be committed to Hegel's metaphysics of individuality and idea of reconciliation.

II. Identity-Thinking

Introduction

This chapter is about Adorno's critique of identity-thinking. It aims to set out some of Adorno's key claims that will be developed in relation to Hegel in Chapter III. As I see it, Adorno's identity critique has (at least) three interrelated dimensions:

1. Identity-thinking as concept-use in ordinary consciousness, thought or perception.

2. Identity-thinking as instrumental rationality that characterises all spheres of late capitalist society.

3. Identity-thinking in philosophy (theories about consciousness and the subject-object relationship).

For Adorno, the same antagonism (a non-identity) emerges in each. These three lines of thought are densely interwoven in Adorno's works and it is not always clear where his criticisms are directed. For example, Adorno does not always state whether the problematic belief or subject-object relation he is referring to is implicit, commonplace, or an explicit philosophical doctrine[12]. I will now proceed by looking at 1 above (Adorno's characterisation of conceptual thought as omitting part of experience and reality: the quality of the object). I will then

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[12] This is not to deny that Adorno has good rhetorical reasons for this (e.g. to show the interconnectedness of everything that is implicated in the ideology of instrumental rationality).

connect it to 2, to raise questions about the relationship, for Adorno, between the limits to our thought and socio-historical factors.

1. Identity-Thinking and Concepts

In *Negative Dialectics,* Adorno discusses what philosophy cannot say about the subject and object. This includes not being able to assert what truth, as an adequate relationship between subject and object would be, without falling into contradictions. For Adorno, our use of concepts explains this predicament. At every turn, Adorno rejects various accounts of knowledge and truth (realist, nominalist, phenomenological, idealist). Adorno would admit that such a negative critique is bound to be unsatisfactory for anyone trying to hold onto stable concepts or first principles in philosophy. One could be forgiven for, at least initially, finding that response puzzling: Adorno seems to make implicit or explicit positive claims to ground his critique of identity-thinking (in all three dimensions observed above), without always making clear his defense, and even seeming to contradict himself by rejecting some of those very claims when they are formulated by other philosophers. This may be an interpretative mistake, but I consider this to roughly characterise the general problem of understanding and critiquing Adorno's negative dialectics (his approach for these questions[13]).

Adorno posits that our epistemic practices involve the implicit belief that concepts are identical to their object (we treat the object as if it were fulfilled by the concept; our apparatus of knowledge and representation depends on this). However, he claims, concepts are *not* identical to their object; there is a nonconceptual quality to reality.

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[13] I will return in Chapter III to Adorno's idea of negative dialectics, as opposed to (but influenced by) Hegel's positive dialectics.

Simultaneously, though, it is in some way true that in our socio-material reality, we experience everything as exhausted by concepts; there is nothing accessible to our knowledge that is not quantified or rationalised by rules of identity and non-contradiction. This brings us to two claims:

Claim 1: there is a non-identity between concept and object; the concept does not exhaust the object; there is a quality, nonconceptual remainder to experience.

Claim 2: there is a shared socio-historically contextualised objectivity, which perniciously matches our rational thinking[14]. We do in some sense 'know' things through concepts.

So, when I look at an object (an apple, for example) and understand it in terms of universals (apple, fruit), this disguises its particular qualities[15]. I take the apple to be "a mere sample of its kind of species" and am convinced I have "the thing as such, without subjective addition" (*ND* 146). I think the concept refers to something real and complete, and exhausts the object. I consider myself to have the relevant concepts to think and talk about this apple[16].

As Adorno (with Horkheimer) puts it in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* concepts are used to generalise and therefore renounce the unique identity of each thing. We take concepts to be identical with their objects, and objects sharing concepts as identical with each other; moreover, in our increasingly commodified society, objects, ideas and projects have comparative quantifiable value, and in this way are

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[14] We will return to this below and in Chapter III.
[15] "to aggregate what is alike means necessarily to segregate it from what is different. But what is different is the qualitative; a thinking in which we do not think qualitatively is already emasculated and at odds with itself" (*ND* 43).
[16] We will examine in Chapter III how this belief and certainty relies on doing and saying what is appropriate within a social community.

identical to one another. Adorno compares the concept to the "material tool"; separating the "known, one, and identical" from the "chaotic" and "disparate" (*DE* 39). This is a method of analysis and synthesis that Ernst Cassirer describes as splitting a phenomenon or event "into its elements" and reconstructing it from these elements to "arrive at an understanding of it" (Cassirer, 1951:10). Adorno thinks this denies the object's unique qualities.

This is what Adorno means when he claims that the identity (that we believe is there) between the concept and the object, is actually non-identical; "the concept does not exhaust the thing conceived" (*ND* 5). There is a deeper meaning to the difference between things that share a concept than them having different spatio/temporal locations, or different further concepts. There is a quality to things in the world escaping our thoughts about them: "[to] yield to the object means to do justice to the object's qualitative moments" (*ND* 43).

This non-identity is not the Kantian thing-in-itself that exists in the noumenal realm (as opposed to the phenomenal realm of our experience). We will see next how Adorno aligns himself with Hegel's position that no individual subject alone will achieve an adequate judgment (concept-object identity), precisely in opposition to Kant (Adorno, 1963:39). For Adorno, the object is not internal to our cognition without residue; objects are not free from the contamination of our thought, but they are not exhaustively constituted by our thought either.

In the sections entitled 'The Qualitative Moment of Rationality' and 'Quality and Individual' (*ND* 43-46), Adorno seems to claim that we encounter this quality; we are somehow receptive to it and it prompts thought, but we are unable to think about it. So, thought has an

immediate contradiction, between what it aims to think about, and what it *does* think about: "a thinking in which we do not think qualitatively is already emasculated and at odds with itself" (*ND* 43).

Adorno discusses Plato as a proponent of the mathematical method, who saw adhering to the "nature of things", "qualitative distinction" as a "corrective for the violence of unleashed quantification" (*ND* 43). The material on which the quantifying process takes place is the qualitative goal of cognition ("Even in statistics" (*ND* 44)). Reasoning will not have reached its insight without the quantitative being translated back to the qualitative (*ND* 44). Adorno writes, "[the] qualitative moment is preserved in all quantification, as the substrate of that which is to be quantified" (*ND* 43). The cognitive goal is the object we have in some sense encountered and tried to understand. Therefore, the quantification will always have a qualitative reference - some content of experience. However, it does not have it properly, adequately or concretely.

This is an instance in which Adorno invokes Hegel, without making it completely clear what he agrees with Hegel about. He claims Hegel, despite ultimately holding, "with the scientivistic tradition" that "the truth of quality itself is quantity" (*ND* 44; Hegel, 1817: 21.320), recognised that quantity is a quality. In the passage from which Adorno quotes, Hegel writes that quantity appears opposed to quality, but this makes it itself a quality: it is "self-referring determinateness as such, distinct from the determinateness which is its other, from quality as such" (1817: 21.320). Quality's truth is then found in quantity (we discover something about quality through this process of positing quantity). Without this process of externality and the determination of quantity, quality "as such would yet not be anything at all" (ibid.).

What does this mean for Adorno's purposes? Perhaps he wants to use Hegel's terms here in this way: *quantum* is a quality. It cannot be considered self-determining, identical with itself, without dealing with its quality element. The relationship between the quantum and its substrate is then presented as the failure of the first to fully capture the latter, while being the only means to go about understanding the latter.

Yet for Adorno, violence is done to quality in the process of using concepts. The qualitative moments return to us in our experience but reason ("*ratio*") continues to quantify, risking "impairing the object", and "recoil[ing]" into "unreason" (*ND* 44). So far, it seems Adorno is saying that our encounter with objects' qualities forces us to think about them quantitatively, in order to reason. Then, we change the object as we find quantitative thinking is useful,or at least change the structure of our understanding, such that it cannot be conscious of qualities; this is unreason, since it contradicts reason's aim. One's practical activity refers to (acts upon) objects with "rational operations" (*ND* 45) as if they were really identical and exchangeable, and thereby makes them so.

Adorno claims that thought always involves identifying (*ND* 5) and that

> The judgment that a thing is such and such is a potential rebuttal to claims of any relation of its subject and predicate other than the one expressed in the judgment. (*ND* 19)

Thinking is declarative; it involves identifying and screens what it "seeks to comprehend" with "[c]onceptual order" (*ND* 5). Adorno implies that our most basic forms of reflection on the world and conscious being are governed by identity-thinking. We might think that a theory of perception is wanting. At times, Adorno does offer something like a phenomenology of the dialectic at play in perception.

He claims that some part of the object will exceed the "definitions imposed on it by thinking" (*ND* 39). This will "face the subject, first of all, as immediacy", which presumably means the subject has some sensory perception, intuition or interaction (which we cannot describe as direct sensory awareness) of a thing without conceptualising it. When Adorno says this experience is "most subjective", he seems to mean that what is most subjective is a connection with the object that has not yet separated the subject from the object: i.e. the conceptualising subject has not yet objectified the object (*ND* 39). Conversely, when the subject, in this primary experience, comes to feel "sure of itself" as a subject (so thinks itself to be most subjective), it is then "least subjective" (*ND* 39). This implies that the subject loses grasp of the moment of immediacy when it imposes determinations on the object.

Now, Adorno claims that self-preservation, by which he seems to mean self-consciousness (preservation of some kind of unity of self) requires continuity of experience through concepts[17] (*ND* 46). It requires objectifying its experience to retain subjective unity, to create what it thinks is an immediate, adequate relationship between subject and object:

> The individual becomes a subject insofar as its individual consciousness objectifies it, in the unity of the self as well as in the unity of its experiences; to animals, presumably, both unities are denied. (*ND* 46)

The subject seems to then create an object out of what Adorno is close to describing as an original, primordial underlying unity between

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[17] We will examine in Chapter III the question of whether self-consciousness of this sort (which is antagonistic and cannot be neatly defined; Adorno does not think we can sharply create boundaries between the epistemic subject and object) was necessary (in an evolutionary sense) for self-preservation.

subject and object, yet, in this passage and elsewhere, Adorno (against phenomenologists such as Kierkegaard) claims we cannot talk of "original experience" without already tainting that experience (*ND* 39).

In the following chapter, I try to clarify what this rational activity involves, and how Hegel influences Adorno's position.

2. Expression and Suffering

Adorno claims the subject is weighed down by objectivity and suffers. Whatever suffering is for Adorno, it cannot be expressed in within our structures of thought and rules of language. However, Adorno can identify it as suffering caused by the inability to express some kind of experience of the nonconceptual - the antagonism in using concepts to resist the nonconceptual (*ND* 18). We have some underlying part of experience we cannot make sense of. Being a victim of an injustice is presumably where this suffering is most felt; the suffering multiplied by the inability to express it. Adorno claims that freedom would be the subject expressing itself and that "[t]he need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth" (*ND* 17-18).

In the passage 'Suffering Physical', Adorno claims that pain and negativity are "the moving forces of dialectical thinking" (*ND* 202). Subsequently, Adorno makes claims about the "somatic element" in knowledge, "the unrest that makes knowledge move, the unassuaged unrest that reproduces itself in knowledge" (*ND* 203). He states the "basic facts of consciousness" are, in pleasure and displeasure, "invaded by a physical moment"[18] (*ND* 202). All happiness and all

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[18] Redmond's translation: "the bodily reaches deep into them"
(http://members.efn.org/~dredmond/nd2.PDF)

displeasure are fulfilled sensually (*ND* 202), but we represent them as if they were body-independent:

> This dimension [*of pleasure and displeasure*] is the anti-spiritual side of the spirit, and in subjective sense data it is enfeebled, so to speak, into the spirit's epistemological copy - not so very different from Hume's curious theory that our ideas, facts [202] of consciousness with an intentional function, are faded copies of our impressions. (*ND* 202-3)

In the next line, Adorno distances himself from naive naturalism (*ND* 203), which seems to mean he rejects that our senses give us direct awareness of the world around us, before making these claims:

1. The contemporary mind is separate from the body.
2. Our conscious unhappiness is inherent in our mind.
3. This conscious unhappiness is a "dignity", "the mind's negative reminder of its physical aspect; its capability of that aspect is the only source of whatever hope the mind can have" (*ND* 203).

This dignity is some awareness that "suffering ought not to be [...] things should be different" (*ND* 203). Adorno is saying human reasoning responds to physical need, so pleasure and displeasure cause reasoning.

In Chapters IV and V, I will examine what it would mean to lend a voice to suffering in history, after having established (in Chapter III and in relation to Hegel) some further ideas about antagonisms involved in experience, how this relates to relations of domination, and what this means for understanding history.

3. Enlightenment and Identity-Thinking

Let us turn to the second of the three dimensions of Adorno's identity critique that I initially set out. This is in order to show that, for Adorno:

1. There is a historicised problem with identity-thinking: that is, there is something particularly problematic about its manifestation as instrumental rationality in contemporary Western capitalism.

2. Even so, it needs to be understood not solely in terms of an isolated era, but as revealing a dialectic that has been ongoing throughout history (of myth and enlightenment).

Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* sets the stage for these ideas. I will briefly present key aspects, then raise some questions which will be developed in Chapter III.

Adorno (with Horkheimer[19]) track the roots of contemporary social injustice (covert and overt), including the catastrophic events of the Second World War, to an intrinsic connection between instrumental rationality and domination. These events, claims Adorno, were not an insurgence of barbarism in an otherwise enlightened world. Compare this with Cassirer, who is also concerned with the barbarism of the twentieth century, with myth's apparent victory over rationality, and the questions this poses; Cassirer writes, "Problems that had been unknown to the political thinkers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries came suddenly to the fore" (Cassirer, 1946:4; cf. *DE* xi). Cassirer asks how barbarism has been possible in spite of

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[19] Henceforth, for brevity, I will only refer to Adorno.

Enlightenment[20] progress. Adorno's answer seems paradoxical: contemporary crises are the effect of the world becoming increasingly enlightened, not less. Adorno employs a broader meaning of enlightenment than Cassirer, using it to refer to a set of "habits and tendencies" (*DE* xi), which he traces back to the ages of mythology, illustrates by drawing on Homer (*DE* 8-9, 13-14, 43-80) and claims were crystallised during the so-called Age of Enlightenment.

Adorno's argument is in the form of a dialectic of enlightenment and myth. Adorno claims Enlightenment rationality arose in resistance to myth and irrationality, but this happened in such a way that our modes of reasoning have remained tied up with their opposite (irrationality, domination), rather than overcoming them. Enlightenment's attempt to assert the sovereignty of reason over myth (*DE* 3) was celebrated for liberating humanity from dogma, ignorance and servitude (see Cassirer, 1951:6). Epistemological theories, such as Kant's, prioritised the "universal method of reason" (op. cit.:93), which came with the claim that the empirical world was systematisable, all nature could be understood by humans, as rational beings[21]. Adorno claims the systematic spirit of society developed to recognise as "being and occurrence only what can be apprehended in unity" (*DE* 7). Adorno argues that thinkers such as Kant "banished thought" into one sphere: the "mastery of nature" (*DE* 26; see Kant, 1787 (*CPR*): A799/B827-A800/B828), in the spirit of Francis Bacon (*DE* 3) who proclaimed that although humans "thrall unto [nature] in necessity [...] we should command her by action" (1825:4).

Enlightenment thought inherently and explicitly separates the subject from nature to use it for instrumental means. This, claims Adorno in a

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[20] I use Enlightenment capitalised to refer to the long-18th Century Age of Enlightenment, and lowercase to refer to all that Adorno's notion of the word encompasses.
[21] We will return to Kant in Chapter III.

lecture, means "the principle of progressive rationality contains an internal conflict. [It] exists only in so far as it can subjugate something different from and alien to itself"; by affirming that there is a resistant and hostile "other", over which reason (conceived of as freedom) needs to be asserted, this "principle of dominant universality" postulates an "antagonism, conflict" (*HF* 13). As distinctions among things in nature are dissolved and made "fungible" (*DE* 10), this implicates the social sphere; dictators treat societies and capitalists treat labourers as means to their ends (*DE* 14). The unity Enlightenment strives for has a false "social character"; it is superficially expressed in solidarity of people, but it has resulted in a unity of society and domination (*DE* 21). Referring to Bacon's observation of the "coincidence between commutative and distributive justice, and arithmetical and geometrical proportion" (1895:126), Adorno claims the "same equations dominate bourgeois justice and commodity exchange" (*DE* 7). The attempt to achieve economic equality and treat humans equally actually negates their differences and brings them to conformity (*DE* 12; *DE* 37[22]).

In what sense does this make enlightenment intrinsically tied to myth? Adorno claims that Enlightenment is "mythic fear turned radical" (*DE* 16); it controls what it fears will disrupt its system and self-conception. That is, anything that does not fit the system must either be made to fit it, or its existence eradicated. What remains is considered untrue, or undesirable (politically, culturally, according to some instrumentally rational end) and measures are taken to force what deviates to comply to existing systems (through socio-political oppression). Enlightenment's relentless will to systematisation, computation and objectivity becomes mythological. People are prone to following various kinds of "irrational" faiths and ideologies, which appear ordered and

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[22] The final chapter critically examines what Adorno means by the individual's incommensurability, based on the different elements that contribute to this claim that will be analysed in the next chapters.

systematic, and are used as instruments to lead to "barbarism" and evil (DE 20). Thus, instrumental rationality, enlightenment reasoning, is characterised by using things instrumentally, which involves thinking about them as, or implicitly taking them to be, and making them, means to our ends.

Adorno argues that we are increasingly dominated (controlled by) and alienated (since it is the product of our activity) from the rationalised technological world, and there is no sign of us becoming conscious of this; the general population is increasingly succumbing to repetitive entertainment that provides comfort and an ideology of having a happy life, which keeps us in our roles and makes us susceptible to political myths and "popular paranoia", which is all evidence, he claims, of a weakening "theoretical faculty" (*DE* xiii). Forcing socialism onto societies, he claims, would only dominate us further, taking advantage of our susceptibility, and not resolving the underlying problems.

To have the luxury of understanding the world, we have created a world that we can, on the surface, understand and make intelligible, but this is at the cost of failing to understand what lies behind our categories: an incapacity to recognise problems when they cannot be captured systematically. Instrumental rationality, then, is identity-thinking. In *Negative Dialectics,* Adorno claims the object moves further and further away from our knowledge (*ND* 22)[23]. We can only know the nature that we control and the more things we know, the more we feel

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[23] "Great philosophy was accompanied by a paranoid zeal to tolerate nothing else, and to pursue everything else with all the cunning of reason, while the other kept retreating farther and farther from the pursuit. The slightest remnant of nonidentity sufficed to deny an identity conceived as total. The excrescences of the systems, ever since the Cartesian pineal gland and the axioms and definition of Spinoza, already crammed with the entire rationalism he would then deductively extract - by their untruth, these excrescences show the untruth, the mania, of the systems themselves" (*ND* 22).

nature "receding from us [...] the more its real essence becomes alien to us" (Adorno, 1959a:176). It seems the more successful we are with our (instrumental) reasoning, the more the object escapes us. Adorno thinks that the rationalisation of society today is so total (encompassing all spheres of human activity), that it suppresses potential for critical thought, self-reflection, emancipatory practical reason - that is, for genuine resistance to evil or what seems to be irrational[24]. As O'Connor explains (2004:10), this echoes Lukács's idea that all thought has become calculation in a rationalised society, eradicating space for critical reflection on ends[25]. The historical principle of enlightenment becomes "identical with blind fate" (*HF* 17) in the power it has over individuals.

Now, the point of the myth-enlightenment dialectic is to show not only that we can call our current practices mythological, but that actual ages of mythology already had enlightenment rationality in them. That is, human practices that we might call irrational in relation to ours, also treated nature instrumentally (i.e. rationally), through finding ways to know and to think about it. Mythological fear led to naming what was unknown and terrifying, in order to respond to it (see *DE* 15-16). Adorno refers to *mana,* "the moving spirit" (*DE* 15) - the quasi-mythological principle that cultural anthropologists identify in pre-animalistic stages of religion (Tylor, 1871); he describes it as the attitude that nature is more than what we know about it, and transcends what we directly experience. While this seems to oppose the Enlightenment idea that nature can be fully known and we can control our experience in it (i.e. we are free in relation to it) the practice of naming for our survival, for our interests, remains. This carries a belief

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[24] Here the question arises of what it means to have potential, or for an alternative to identity-thinking to be, or to have been, possible. I will set out the questions more specifically below and see how Adorno uses Hegel to think about identity-thinking as both necessary and contingent.

[25] A number of commentators argue there is more of Lukács in Adorno than Adorno reveals or perhaps realises (see in particular Feenberg, 2014).

that something really is what we name it to be, and it becomes so in our shared objectivity; we come to take it as given. In Chapter III, Section 2, I ask what Adorno draws from Hegel to understand how this shared false knowledge is possible.

Is all our conscious experience in the world an instance of measuring and discriminating? We appear, by Adorno's reckoning, to have feelings, sensations and conscious experiences that do not *per se* make non-identical objects identical. As we will see in Chapter III, Adorno implies such elements of experience cannot only have their expression (in thought and communication) in concepts, and that we cannot cleanly divide which parts of perception or experience are separable from ordering and identifying what is different.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have outlined some of the different directions in which we are pulled by Adorno's key claims about identity-thinking. We have seen that identity-thinking is related to unfreedom and injustice within so-called enlightened human society and that Adorno believes the same practices that developed in human's rational mastery over nature and over myth (over that which could not be controlled or understood) explain mastery over humans by other humans, and by an illusion of objectivity that we create. In the next chapter I will investigate these points further in relation to Hegel, and try to establish:

1. What does Adorno claim to take (and need) from Hegel to understand practices of conceptual thought, and the object's involvement?

2. What guarantees or enables identity-thinking? Does Adorno's critique require further claims about social and historical factors? Or, is identity-thinking a necessary, basic function of human existence?

III. Hegel's Influence

Introduction

At first glance, Adorno's non-identity thesis flatly opposes Hegel's system of philosophy (absolute idealism), which holds that there *is* identity between the subject and object: between concepts and objects[26]. However, here we will examine how Adorno sees Hegel contributing to his own point of view. The aim is to ask how this further illuminates Adorno's claims about what makes our modes of reasoning irrational and the socio-historical factors involved. I will explore how Adorno praises and uses Hegel in the face of identity-thinking, but offers an alternative conception of how philosophy should proceed. Adorno considers Hegel to demonstrate that philosophers can only be critical and negative, and must work within their historical-experiential limitations. In Chapters IV and V we will consider what this can plausibly mean for Adorno.

In Section 1, I align Adorno's critique of identity-thinking with Hegel's critique of *Verstand.* In Section 2, I examine how Adorno takes Hegel's critique of Kant to support his position about concept-object non-identity. In Section 3, I consider Adorno's claims on what Hegel shows us about the role of language in judgment. This helps establish how sociality enables changes in conceptual thought, and how domination of the object connects with domination of the thinking subject. In Section 4, I examine what Adorno's critical discussion of Hegel on contingency in history amounts to and propose how to

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[26] As Rose has pointed out, Adorno's understanding of the subject-object relation would be "nonsense" to Hegel (Rose, 2014:79). Adorno might accept that, arguing he can show an implicit line of thought in Hegel opposing Hegel's absolute identity.

understand the mis-inference Adorno claims Hegel makes when claiming that history is rational. In Section 5, I examine what Adorno argues about the necessity of conceptual thought and domination, and their origins. In Sections 6 and 7, I show how these aspects of Adorno's use of Hegel help elucidate his approach to historical investigation, and philosophy's limits in general.

1. Identity-Thinking and Hegel's critique of *Verstand*

The conception of reason celebrated by Enlightenment thinkers and which Adorno regards as instrumental rationality, is the kind of reason, or understanding, that Hegel criticises as *Verstand*, and which a better, true, reason (as *Vernunft*) is supposed to refute or sublate. Thus, we can align Adorno and Hegel's conceptions of identity-thinking and *Verstand,* as ways in which we seek knowledge of the world and theorise about that knowledge.

Adorno considers Kant's philosophy and conception of reason to be ultimately uncritical (it accommodated to what is given, like today's prevailing reason[27]), and he reads Hegel offering tools for critique of reality, in response to Kant (Adorno, 1963:30). Hegel's early texts such as *Faith and Knowledge* (1802a) and his introduction, with Schelling, to the *Critical Journal of Philosophy* (1802b) clearly anticipate Adorno's criticisms of calculating, measuring rationality (*Verstand*), rejecting that a relationship of truth between subject and object obtains in an individual subject's determination (1802a). Hegel would recognise that *Verstand* prevails in the contemporary highly

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[27] In Adorno's critical analysis (1959:57f) of Kant's essay 'An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?' (1784a), he discusses Kant's thesis that less civil freedom will ensure more intellectual freedom to achieve enlightenment; one can argue and criticise freely, but must comply with their institutional roles.

rationalised world. He sees *Verstand* as the approach to knowledge in which concepts are expected to display stable, fixed boundaries and relations to one another (Hegel, 1812-16:53), and which takes the world to be, and/or believes our knowledge ought to be, logical and systematic. In his criticism of Kantian ethics, Hegel warns against the uncritical worship of ideals such as freedom, because evil acts can be done in their name (1821: §139)[28]; these ideals are universals which are found to be different from the particulars, the reality, they apply to (so can be called abstract) (Hegel, 1821:§186).

For Adorno, critiquing identity-thinking/*Verstand* as theories of knowledge[29] implies critiquing identity-thinking as ordinary concept-use. Let us now see how Adorno understands Hegel as showing this.

2. Subject-Object Mediation: Hegel vs. Kant

As we saw in Chapter II, Adorno claims we only experience an object's quality negatively, and that what identity-thinking takes to be the case about the subject-object relation (that objects are identical to their concepts and subject are not objects[30]) contradicts what *is* the case. Adorno credits Hegel with demonstrating this, in his critique of Kant. I will now look at two particular ideas that Adorno seems to be pointing to, which fill out the account introduced in Chapter II: an idea of mediation between objects and concepts (or particulars and universals), which implies no clean division between subject and object,

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[28] We will see Adorno believes Hegel's idea of reason as the absolute, also does not successfully apply to the particulars it purports to: i.e. all things in the world.
[29] The 3rd dimension listed in Chapter II.
[30] We saw that the subject takes itself not to be an object; it preserves its identity by identifying, objectifying other things.

and an idea of sociality enabling there to be determinate conceptual content.

On Adorno's reading of Kant[31], the objects of our experience (phenomena) are each consigned to being "the atom it becomes in the logic of classification" (*ND* 25/34). On Kant's schema, in which nature is fully systematisable and law-regulated, objects are static in their relations to one another. They interact and are related according to rules, in universal and necessary ways (Kant, 1787:A69). This, for Adorno, affirms the way that concepts trim qualities to fit concepts and makes things "congealed and frozen" (Adorno, 1963:73). Kant's solution to whether our representations of the world are accurate is, in short, that there are transcendental conditions for representations; we (as transcendental subjects who are also empirical subjects) are the source of the structure of experience (Kant, 1787:A226-8). This comes with a limitation on our cognition; the noumenal realm (the object in-itself) cannot be known. However, we are assured on this picture that our representations in the phenomenal realm are necessary, universal and correct, and that we have a shared discursive reality. Adorno takes issue with how Kant establishes correctness and universality, without, he claims, appropriate consideration of the object's involvement or of social factors (Adorno, 1959:151)[32].

For identity-thinking to work in the way presented in Chapter II, Adorno must agree that our concepts are in rational relations to one another. That is, conceptual content (a concept's meaning) is

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[31] I am heavily consolidating Adorno's critique of Kant, for the purposes of grasping this specific one through (what Adorno considers to be) Hegel's lens. Moreover, several commentators have highlighted how Kant provides Adorno with resources for thinking about the nonconceptual in experience (O'Connor, 2004:17, 22; Cook, 2014a:51-2).

[32] Adorno seems to accuse Kant of banishing the object in-itself outside of experience, so that our conceptualising activity is independent of it. Adorno takes this to be a separation of subject-object that is motivated by us wanting to banish and be free of the unknown.

determined by its relations of consequence and incompatibility with others (inferential relations). To have a concept is to know what it means, which means to know when to use it, so conceptual content (meaning) is a use-norm. Concepts provide reasons for applying and not applying other concepts. I raise this in order to set up the dispute between Hegel and Kant (where Adorno sides with Hegel) on the question: how are conceptual use-norms instituted? Adorno seems to find and appreciate the same insight in Hegel's critique of Kant on this issue as Robert Brandom does[33]. There are points in which Brandom's reading of Hegel seems to align with Adorno's[34] and strengthen Adorno's position. Following a summary of Brandom's praise of Hegel's argument, I will show where I take Adorno to be offering the same praise.

As Brandom puts it, for Kant conceptual content and inferential relations are "fully settled in advance of any application of those universals to particulars in judgment" (Brandom, 2013:11; see also 2014:V 218). The problem with Kant's position, according to Brandom, is that the idea of "epistemic constraint" becomes incoherent (2013:12). Brandom's argument proceeds as follows.

Kant has it that concepts shape particular judgments (applications of concepts to particulars), but does not, or cannot hold on his own theory, that particular judgments shape concepts. Brandom argues on behalf of Hegel, that, surely, as we come to have new judgments about the world, our concepts will change; their determinate conceptual content (use-norm) will adjust because of this new knowledge. For Kant, the particular judgment (judging an object to be *x*) could not have

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[33] Brandom's semantic reading of Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* is not uncontroversial. However, I suggest that in certain instances it can act as a heuristic for interpreting Adorno's points.

[34] As explained in the introduction, my purpose is not to establish whether Hegel can ultimately respond, but to present a way of critically reading and supporting at least one line of Adorno's engagement with Hegel.

caused the change, since its occurrence was empirically contingent (for Kant, empirical contingencies do not determine universal and necessary laws of representation). What, then, fixed the conceptual content in the first place? What made the judgment objectively, universally, valid if it turns out its application of a universal to a particular was incorrect? On Kant's picture, authority for judgment is supposed to come from the spontaneity of the subject. However, it then looks like nothing prevents the subject from authorising a new use-norm, changing the conceptual content, anytime, in any way it sees fit (Brandom, 2013:12). Brandom thinks Kant fatally loses the idea of responsibility on the part of the subject, of constraint on concept-usage: "The Kantian division of semantic[35] and epistemic labor seems unable to exclude the possibility that 'whatever seems right to me is right'" (2013:12). The idea that judging correctly means having the judgment that is universally and necessarily required for the particular we encounter[36], breaks down.

This critique looks to be remarkably similar to one of Adorno's on Kant (e.g. Adorno, 1959a:138-179). Adorno is concerned about how, in Kant, the subject is supposed to account for both correctness (the right concept for the object) and universality (applying the same concept-application as everyone else) (1959:143); that is, Kant's transcendental subject is supposed to account for how determinate conceptual content is fixed in advance, but our experiences with objects cause adjustments to use-norms[37].

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[35] meaning of the concept.

[36] There is something puzzling about this criticism, and Kant may well have an answer. For Kant, the table of judgments is prior to the categories, so on his view, he does allow judgment to shape concepts. It is true pure concepts of the understanding and their schematized versions are not alterable. However, Kant is absolutely willing to grant that empirically conditioned concepts are subject to change and improvement over time; the function of reflective judgment generates new concepts (Kant, 1787: B141, A176-218).

[37] See Adorno, 1963:66 and 1956:133 for further critique of how form and content can fit together in Kant. He argues Kant's argument about concept-application and normativity hinges on the form-content conjunction, yet we cannot form any notion

How does Hegel help (for Adorno) account for institution of conceptual use-norms[38]? We saw in Chapter II that Adorno takes it that for Hegel, the inherent function of concepts is to quantify: to delimit, organise and divide quality. In particular judgments, we apply concepts (universals) to particular objects, based on the rational relations between universals (*ND* 43-4). However, we sometimes find an object does not comply with the concept we use (failing to instantiate a consequent one, or calling for an incompatible concept), which leads us to adjust our conceptual use-norms (Adorno, 1963:76). The particular judgment is, then, involved in instituting conceptual content, which means we respond to the particular object, the quality[39]; the concept cannot just "insert changing meanings into [the object] from the outside" (Adorno, 1963:71). Concepts are then instituted through application, through judgments about objects:

> only when the life of the thing expressed by the concept is compared with the meaning specified and when the old meaning is thereby dishonored as invalid, is the other meaning constituted. (Adorno, 1963:113)

For Adorno, Hegel shows that form and content are more reciprocally-dependent than Kant thought (Adorno, 1963:65). He thinks Hegel captures this by showing that every identity-judgment, A=A (this object is this concept) is necessarily dependent on the judgment of non-identity, A=B (this object is different from this concept) (Adorno, 1963:135).

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of what it really is for content, as sensory, to conform, or fail to conform, to pure concepts of intellect.

[38] As we have seen, use-norms, determinate content, and meaning are treated interchangeably.

[39] We saw in Chapter II that quantity always works on quality, but this discussion should help understand which ideas from Hegel explain why.

Adorno attributes the following claim to Hegel:

> To comprehend a thing itself, not just to fit and register it in its system of reference, is nothing but to perceive the individual moment in its immanent connection with others. (*ND* 25/34; also Adorno, 1963:70)

Let us break down what this means for Adorno. First of all, we have the implication from above that our conceptual boundaries are not permanent. The way objects appear to us now is not, in fact, fixed: objects of our representation change. The static relations in which they appear to us at any point are not the way they are related (for conceptualising subjects) universally.

Furthermore, Adorno takes Hegel to show that objects are always different to our determinations and this will gradually force us to adjust our conceptual content. Objects are in relations with one another,[40] which our conceptual framework, at any given point, does not capture. There is always mind-independence, part of the object eluding our determinations. We would not conceptualise objects with certainty, unless objects were involved in concept-institution, but we are not responding correctly to the object's involvement[41] in judgment.

For Adorno, this dialectical process between object and concept is negative. He variably uses Hegel's notion of negation to describe the following: (1) concepts are in relations of determinate negation to one another, that is, of incompatibility and consequence; a concept, a thought object, intrinsically or internally negates another; (2) the object negates its concept, and conceptuality at large; (3) the subject negates a

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[40] Chapter IV further examines this idea of objects in non-conceptual relations.
[41] This is not the picture Hegel arrives at. What I am presenting, and where I quote from Hegel, attempts to show Adorno's reading, which does not follow the logical order of Hegel's philosophy.

past conceptual meaning; (4) concepts negate what objects are; (5) negative dialectical thinking involves negation (critique), but no positivity (i.e. no positive determinate, stable, conclusions)[42] (Adorno, 1963:77).

This should clarify the notion that instrumental rationality comes into concept use (from Chapter II): we have reasons (because of rational relations between concepts) to apply concepts to objects. This is, for Adorno, using the object as means to an end; we are applying the concept because of (i.e. for the purpose of/as a means to the end of) our conceptual framework. When we adjust our conceptual content, the object's resistance to it is translated into a reason to change our concepts, for those same ends (our conceptual apparatus, rather than what the object really demands).

Hegel reads this process of conceptual development as indicative of a better reason than *Verstand* implicitly at work. We will continue to see reasons for Adorno's rejection of this.

3. Language and Sociality

How is the concept-object dialectic as described enabled by social relations in Adorno's account? At points it is unclear what Adorno means when he claims to take up Hegel's understanding of the relationship between the individual thinker and society. Adorno frequently insists that Hegel demonstrates that the epistemic subject (that Kant took to be transcendental) is social (*ND* 200). He uses Hegel's terminology, such as *Geist*, and the universal, to describe society; however, for Hegel, these have metaphysical connotations and

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[42] We will return to this in Section 7.

imply necessity, freedom and rationality; for Adorno's purposes, they do not.

We can pose the question as follows: what kind of social restraint enables us to share the changing, determinate conceptual content, as described above? When Adorno polemically claims that Kant's idea of universality of representation ultimately relies on consensus (*ND* 143-4), we can understand he means that explicit or implicit agreement between people allows for a shared discursive reality. Adorno claims the individual consciousness is related to social consciousness, as the accidental is related to the rule-governed mechanisms of concept-use and abstraction (Adorno, 1959:144) (we could say, both are relationships between contingency and normativity). Social consciousness presumably means our shared representations and beliefs about the world, which implies that conceptual use-norms are socially-instituted and socially-regulated. Having a concept means knowing how to use it appropriately in one's social community (*ND* 146).

I think setting this out helps grasp what Adorno considers to be Hegel's insight on the role of language in thought. Adorno seems to claim that our concept-application (our judgments) are enabled by participation in a linguistic community:

> As an expression of the thing itself, language is not fully reducible to communication with others. Nor, however - and Hegel knew this - is it simply independent of communication. Otherwise it would elude all critique, even in its relationship to the matter at hand, and would reduce that relationship to an arbitrary presumption. Language as expression of the thing itself and language as communication are interwoven. The ability to name the matter at hand is developed under the compulsion to

communicate it, and that element of coercion is preserved in it; conversely, it could not communicate anything that it did not have as its own intention, undistracted by other considerations. This dialectic plays out within the medium of language itself; it is not merely a fall from grace on the part of an inhumane social zeal that watches to make sure that no one thinks anything that cannot be communicated. Even a linguistic approach of the utmost integrity cannot do away with the antagonism between what is in itself and what is for others. (1963:105)

This passage is rich for our purposes. Adorno claims that an individual is bound by norms, of which she might not be conscious, to use a concept only in a sense the community fixes for it. To use Brandom's terms (2013 and 2014), this bindingness comes from others authorising my use, and holding me responsible, through communication. For my particular judgment to be recognised as expressing something new (so for me to institute a new conceptual content) others must recognise it as normative; they must recognise me as responding to reasons. Language, implies Adorno, has a fundamental role in determining our conceptualisations, thus in determining what exists for us, rather than just being a sign for what exists (*DE* 15).

The key thing Adorno concludes from this is that our accountability to norms of communication (conceptual use-norms) and our accountability to the object are in tension. This is a fundamental antagonism of social being, which Adorno thinks Hegel points to. We are under compulsion to function socially, which depends on following normative constraints on how we express our experience of objects, and thus on how we experience objects (because expression leads to changes in conceptual content, which leads to changes in how objects appear to us in experience). Adorno also emphasises here that we are trying to express the uniqueness of our experience of the object (in

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Chapter II this was described as negativity and suffering). Yet, the way we come to express it to ourselves, depends on others authorising the expression. Language is then fundamental to the ills of identity-thinking:

> The moment of universality in language, without which there would be no language, does irrevocable damage to the complete objective specificity of the particular thing it wants to define. (Adorno, 1963:106)[43]

Adorno praises Hegel for recognising the importance of language (1963:117): Hegel in various places claims that language is the "perfect expression [...] for the mind" (Hegel, 2007:§411) and the "highest power possessed by mankind" (Hegel, 1986a:157). In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, language is a key part of the stage of culture; speech allows for recognition of others and self: "In speech, self-consciousness, qua independent separate individuality, comes as such into existence, so that it exists for others" (Hegel 1807:§308)[44]. With these references, Adorno seems to want to say that Hegel recognised (but ended up glorifying as though it were something intrinsically positive) how language institutes concepts and meanings, and allows reflection and development of thought. The stronger claim is that self-consciousness (having, or having consciousness of, independence from objects) is enabled by recognition from others, through speech. We can infer that Adorno is suggesting that our form of self-consciousness is intrinsically tied to communication.

However, Adorno claims that elsewhere Hegel depreciates language to a vessel, or a medium, to communicating thoughts rather than

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[43] What follows is Adorno's suggestion that language can be used to correct itself, by prioritising the object over objectivity. We will examine this in Chapter IV.
[44] Hegel also discusses how public speech acts by state powers are performances, which construct modern relations of recognition (1807:§508).

instituting them: "the bearer of the content of subjective consciousness" rather than "expression of the Idea" (1963:117). Adorno claims that on Hegel's own terms, language "like art" should have been considered "a manifestation of truth", rather than just a medium of communication (1963:118). With these two points, Adorno suggests that while Hegel recognises in places how language institutes determinations of (what we take to be) truth[45], he did not always pay enough attention to it in his interpretation of the history of our consciousness. This may mean Hegel's understanding of reason at work in history did not sufficiently note linguistic embodiments of novel thoughts and judgments, especially in literature (Adorno, 1963:118)

Adorno claims that the current "historical moment" makes the antagonism in language-use particularly problematic, because our communication is significantly "dictated by the market" (1963:106). Perhaps this suggests that since we are increasingly commodifying objects (*DE* 120f), changes in conceptual content through communication primarily involve calculation of exchange-value. Adorno may also be pointing out that the space we might have previously had for sharing or hearing novel reflections about the world is reduced as our desires, interests and intentions are increasingly controlled and predetermined. Written and spoken word in literature and film has become commodified and repetitive, argues Adorno; it is created for exchange-value rather than artistic value, and to keep the population content with their lives, confirm their beliefs, rather than reflect or form new judgments (see e.g. *DE* 125; *DE* 135; *MM* 22, 30, 81, 98).

Referring to Hegel's writing as a counterpoint, Adorno writes, "Language would rather become unintelligible than disfigure the

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[45] Hegel reads truth as something 'becoming', through our false determinations, such that our false, negated, determinations are all shown to determinate for truth.

matter at hand through a communication that gets in the way of communicating it" (1963:106). However, Adorno claims that what eventually led Hegel astray (from a self-critical philosophy acknowledging its limits) was a lack of focus on language (*ND* 163): "Hegelian dialectics was a dialectics without language, while the most literal sense of the word "dialectics" postulates language" (ibid.), which could mean that Hegel's own mode of philosophy, dialectical thinking, was insufficiently aware of the limits inherent in language.

4. Contingency in History

Adorno claims that Hegel helps us focus on what other theorists (positivists, metaphysicians, his Idealist contemporaries, Adorno's contemporary analytic philosophers) would dismiss as "facticity", or contingency:

> Philosophy acquires the right and accepts the duty to appeal to material moments originating in the real life process of socialized human beings as essential and not merely contingent. The artificially resurrected metaphysics of today, which castigates that as a descent into mere facticity and claims to protect the being of beings from beings, regresses behind Hegel when it comes to what is crucial [...]. (1963:67)

From the previous sections, we can interpret Adorno as highlighting that if we start out by looking for what is essential or universal as something antinomous to contingency, then we fail to see that it is only through what we took to be contingency (empirical lived experiences) that our ideas of what are essential, and many things we took to be essential to human experience, are instituted.

Adorno praises Hegel's insight into a dialectic of the particular and universal in history. Adorno uses this to refer to an individual and the normative sphere or the "universal tendency" (*HF*11) of their society, to individuals and the course of history in general, as well as to particular experiences or events and the norms or tendencies governing it. In many places, Adorno uses the term 'contingency' instead of 'particular'. Adorno claims Hegel ultimately abandoned his commitment to this dialectic, in his theory of history and logic of totality, when dismissing certain things in history as mere fact, "worthless existence" (*HF* 38; see Hegel, 1840:43)[46].

Adorno takes Hegel's insight to be that that much of what seem like contingent actions, and our practical commitments and behaviours, are governed by norms that we collectively sustain (*ND* 45-6). Moreover, social roles control who is afforded recognition of their judgment's normative force; norm-institution is contingent on power relations, rather than on reciprocal, mutual adjudication of reasons. Normativity serves the ends of dominant human groups, and different groups will adopt different conceptual content to ensure conformity to their roles. On Hegel's picture, antagonisms implicit in each universal will come to the fore when disagreements arise about norms, and they are found to be contradictory. A society's normative force breaks down, out of which a new complex of norms, a new spirit emerges (Hegel, 1840:40). For Hegel, history is a process of developing, clarifying and expressing concepts; responding to requirements to correct our position (Hegel, 1807:§808). Thus, as we change the way things are for us, as our conceptual contents change, the world approximates goodness and truth. The norms developed over history are then implicitly rational,

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[46] Nisbet's translation to which I refer does not retain the clause with 'mere existence' that in the original German, reads, "Diesen will die Philosophie erfassen; denn nur was aus ihm vollführt ist, hat Wirklichkeit, was ihm nicht gemäß ist, ist nur faule Existenz" (Hegel, *Werke* (1986b) xii. 53). The John Sibree ([1857] 2001) translation of Karl Hegel's German edition does retain it.

necessary, and good, even though each has been negated by its successor (Hegel, 1817: Part I, IX).

Hegel also understand our attitudes *about* norms to be changing, again through disagreement about and contradictions within ideas of what it means to be norm-following[47] (e.g. Hegel, 1807:§438f, §459; 1807:§665-7; 1807:234-5 §391). Hegel argues that over time, we come to see that there is "contingency to the necessity of the activity" (to what makes the activity normatively required) (1807 §475). For Hegel, what normativity is, or must essentially be, is a resolution of contingency and normativity; the resolution he envisages would involve individuals instituting norms without antagonism. Their particular interests would align with the norms they follow, and would allow others to do the same (Hegel, 1807:§144-145); individuals would be disposed to do what is required by the institutions (Hegel, 1821:§146-148) and recognise one another as mutually-recognising norm-followers (Hegel, 1807:§184). He understands this as as the goal of *Spirit* (reason as *Vernunft*, self-consciousness, coming to know itself through human history).

Adorno rejects the idea that this dialectic should be read as a rational process, and claims to be (unlike Marx in *The Philosophy of Right*) criticising Hegel on his own terms, according to Hegel's goalpost of following through the implications of the universal-particular dialectic (*HF* 42; *ND* 28). Adorno's main criticism seems to be firstly that there are antagonisms throughout history that are left unresolved, so that, as with conceptual norms (set out in Section 2) we cannot read positive

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[47] For Hegel, human history moves through the stages of: 1. *Sittlichkeit* (ethical community) with objectivity - this is a pre-modern/traditional stage of humanity, where norms are identified with as objective, given, and individuals identify with those norms, their social roles, as being natural, necessary; 2. Alienation with subjectivity (modern stage of humanity); 3. *Sittlichkeit* with subjectivity (the stage Hegel anticipates as explicitly creating what is implicit (Hegel, 1807).

progression into it; the universal (the norm) is not responding adequately to the particular.

The charge is that Hegel only acknowledges the antagonisms he recognises as leading to a breakdown of a society's complex of norms[48]. Interests not articulated or suggested via a platform for petitioning recognition (for example, interests of oppressed groups that went unnoticed) would not have their use of conceptual norms considered by Hegel as rational critiques or revisions (*HF* 59). On Adorno's interpretation, for Hegel "only something that has become real is actually possible" (Adorno, 1963:83), from Hegel's arguments that what is rational is necessary (Hegel, 1821:preface and 1817). Adorno partly echoes Marx, but emphasises we have no warrant to read necessity into history: Hegel, in the end, "sides with the big guns [...] adopts the judgment of a reality that always destroys what could be different" (Adorno, 1963:83).

Adorno also argues that Hegel inserts a dichotomy between contingency and normativity, when interpreting history. For Hegel, philosophical enquiry into history aims to eliminate contingency, in order to identify the rational, which is the necessary (Hegel, 1840:28). Doing history is applying thought to thought (the subject matter is self-consciousness developing) (Hegel, 1840:26). From our perspective, with higher ideals of a more advanced culture, we can identify the components of the dialectics that manifest themselves in past events and eras that propel the rational process of history (Hegel, 1840:24)[49].

[48] Hegel, for example, gives women a valuable role in the antagonisms that move forward the dialectic of history; the sexed division moves us from "natural being" to "ethical significance" (1807:§459). However, if we assume that 'woman' is an essential category whose functions or relations to others adjust, this might disguise some important elements of the situation, as de Beauvoir (1949) argued; i.e. that what we think is biologically essential is actually socially formed. Adorno signals such issues, though it is a shame he did not engage explicitly with gender issues, given his critical program.
[49] As Beiser puts it (1993), for Hegel, doing history requires understanding the ideas and values of the time and how they come to conflict with agents' experience.

Philosophy brings to historical interpretation that reason governs the world (Hegel, 1840:26-8). Eliminating contingency for Hegel means both showing where what appears to be contingent is rational but also putting aside facts that do not reveal the development of reason.

Adorno claims that these latter facts Hegel ignores may well challenge the rationality of the course of reason Hegel is identifying; Adorno accuses Hegel in the preface to *Philosophy of Right* of "sneering at those who would reform the world" (1963:85). Adorno argues that silenced opinions or critiques should be considered at least as rational as anything else, on Hegel's terms, even if they were "powerless" to change the "historical trend" they are criticising (*HF* 63). Adorno argues the failure of these ideas to be realised is not because of a lack of response to reality; on the contrary, they may be possibilities "that reality itself, however weakly, is putting out feelers to" (Adorno, 1963:84). Adorno argues they should be considered examples of "self-reflection" (1963:118) and pointing in some way to how the world can and should be.

It seems Adorno is claiming that Hegel holds: (i) an individual is governed by a norm, and judges it to be wrong (Adorno, 1963:84); (ii) her protest is not rational unless it is heard (*HF* 65-6). Adorno's objection seems to be, firstly, that if Hegel understands norms to be dependent on everyone who actualises them, then we cannot selectively choose whose judgments are relevant when retrospectively assessing the reasonableness of the norm and the relevant antagonisms and determinate negations. Nor can we say that only some of the contingency involved was necessary. Otherwise, Hegel loses the idea that all particulars of a universal, condition that universal (*HF* 64). This is how Adorno can say that Hegel introduces a dualism, a "*chorismos* of reason and unreason, chance and necessity" where there is supposed to be mediation (*HF* 65-6; see also 1963:131).

Adorno praises Hegel for acknowledging that the "actual historical power" emerges as "stronger" over the particular ("the realm of realities, the so-called facts" (*HF* 43, 26)). The norms *de facto* in society govern us more than we control them; they appear to be necessary (unchangeable), but we cannot, Adorno argues, interpret this to mean world history is "concept, spirit, and therefore 'good'" (*HF* 43; see also 1963:42-3). If Hegel is right that reason (as *Vernunft*) would mean checking our universals (concepts, ideals) against particulars (judgments, things), then Adorno presses that we must discover where, throughout history, we have failed to do so (*HF* 65-6).

Adorno then appears to take from Hegel the idea that contingency is constitutive of normativity (of concept- and norm-formation and use: so of our identity-thinking and instrumental rationality), but that this does not show, as positivists might say, that normativity disappears and fact takes its place. On the other hand, Adorno rejects Hegel's move to take the presence of normativity as a sign of genuine rationality. Adorno agrees with Hegel that we should understand concepts as gaining content processually and socially, while being used as if they were ready-made and had stable, static boundaries. However, Adorno denies that this space[50], guiding application of particular concepts on particular occasions[51], can be theorised as *Vernunft*; as genuine openness to experience (*ND* 388). Rather, it is occupied by more instrumental reason (*HF* 44-5), and this displaces what ought to be

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[50] Adorno thinks Hegel pointed to a "genuine reality" in his "defence of that absolute reason that comes to understand itself" (*HF* 44).

[51] Adorno claims Hegel takes the illusion of truth as a sign of truth becoming explicit (Adorno, 1963:94; see Hegel, *Encyclopedia Logic,* 351-2); "because no subjective judgment can be true and yet each and every one must want to be true, truth transcends itself and becomes something in itself" (Adorno, 1963:39).

there[52]. Adorno claims Hegel assumes the existence of what is actually absent: critical reflective spirit (*HF* 47).

5. Necessity of Domination and Identity-thinking

Adorno claims that the same "principle of dominion" causes antagonisms in human society and antagonisms in the "difference between concept and its subject matter" (*ND* 48). Both using people and using objects instrumentally is constitutive of identity-thinking. At this point in the investigation, within the aims of asking how socio-historical factors come into the problems of conceptual thought, we might ask why we should accept this.

One line of thought is Adorno entertaining the idea of the origin of consciousness. Adorno considers Hegel to show that suffering and agonism are constitutive of human sociality (1963:3), and human sociality of self-consciousness; the subject treats itself as independent from other subject and objects, but is mediated by its relations to them. As Jarvis puts it, the subject as category appears when one has "conscious mastery over impulse and over other subjects" (1998:28). We cannot think of what it means to be a self-conscious subject, without the dual domination (social and of nature). Adorno indicates he is taking up Hegel's Master and Slave dialectic (Hegel, 1807:§176f) to emphasise the materiality of our being (*ND* 198)[53], rather than the logical account of self-consciousness intended by Hegel. Adorno's

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[52] O'Connor, for example, argues that Adorno has a theory of what ought to be there: the subject's transformative and active rational potential, and that this capacity is lost as we passively relate to the given (2004:75-77). See also Rose, 1978:79.

[53] This echoes materialist criticisms of Hegel made in various ways by Fichte, Feuerbach (1839) and Marx (2000:90). Adorno seems to be showing the criticism needs to made more internally to Hegel; that is, Adorno reads Hegel (at his best) acknowledging the constant non-identity of the object, and the importance of particular experience for thought. It seems for Adorno, the Marxist picture of reconciliation is one-sided, focusing on human capacities for free and creative production (Marx, 1844a:90), which implicitly glorifies our control over nature, by focusing on what we can do with it.

principal aim in doing so appears to be to demonstrate that Hegel betrayed his own plausible ideas of the dependence of consciousness on something other than mind (so, on materiality, as Adorno reads it), by ultimately reducing matter to mind, the object to the subject, in his understanding of the whole of history as the absolute (identity between subject and object) playing out, with no remainder (*ND* 201).

Adorno implies that consciousness of our dependence on nature, on impulse, and of other subjects as obstacles to the fulfillment of our interests, led to seeking independence from nature, overcoming the perpetual flux of impulse and need, as Hegel describes (1807:§174-5). This happened collectively, but through domination and agonism; a form of self-consciousness developed that is reliant on mastery over nature and that strives for recognition from others as being so (*ND* 198). Adorno claims that Marx and Engels were wrong to read an idealist, metaphysical necessity into an otherwise plausible idea that nature left us in shortage, and that the modes of social organisation that emerged (structured by domination) were the only way to respond (*HF* 52). Adorno claims it makes no sense to "conceive of a course of history that does not involve this conflict" between people and between subjects and objects (*HF* 52).

What, then, does Adorno offer against concluding that "everything is fundamentally flawed" (*HF* 8); why think existence could have been otherwise? To allow that history could have played out differently, Adorno must hold that either (i) a different kind of subjectivity could have emerged instead, or (ii) the emergence of the subject as we know it was necessary (which raises the question of what kind of necessity), and we could, and should have, overcome the antagonism through some kind of transformative change.

Adorno seems to lean to the second option, indicating some interplay of a naturalistic and transcendental story. Adorno quotes from Schelling's *Die Weltalter* (1811:136 & 140) in which Schelling characterises a primordial relaxed state of nature, wherein craving inherently lies: "Urge, according to Schelling's insight, is the mind's preliminary form" (*ND* 202). Peter Dews suggests that we consider Adorno's picture as Schellingian; that is, Adorno's position can be explained, or strengthened, by Schelling's idea that there was a primordial potentiality (craving) in nature, that develops into willing (a separation between subject and object), out of which develops another will, spirit, that self-reflects on that willing (Dews, 2015:1189). It seems helpful to view Adorno through this lens; we can think of this third, self-reflecting will as one with the power to go badly wrong, as well as to achieve subject-object reconciliation, and which way it goes depends on how responsive we are to what experience demands. Adorno, however, claims Schelling's philosophy of nature is "dogmatic" (1963:3). Nevertheless, this does not exclude the possibility that the aporia Adorno finds in Hegel is anticipated and overcome[54] in Schelling.

However, Adorno does not think it is possible to achieve a conclusive account of the origins of conflict and consciousness (*HF* 52). Instead, he takes us through different paths of theorising about the issues and shows their limits. On the question of whether concepts and identity-thinking can come apart, Adorno claims that the only alternative to thinking without "concepts, without abstraction [...and] synthesis" would be "blind intuition" (1959:143). This disjunction means that an alternative to identity-thinking (that ever was, could have been, or could be) would operate in some dimension with universality and concepts. This suggests there are aspects of our synthesising of experience that: (i) are universal to human experience;

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[54] See also Fischbach (2014) for arguments in this vein.

(ii) are not, on their own, sufficient for identity-thinking; (iii) would allow, in an alternative history of the development of conceptuality and orientation to the world, responsive mediation with objects (which blind intuition would not).

For example, Adorno suggests that because the constitution of subject happens in time (our unity of consciousness requires particular experiences—our sensory interactions with objects—to institute universals), we must have an inner intuition of time (1959a:167). However, we have to appreciate the historical origin of the category of time that we are employing (1959a:168). Once we admit that, we are led to further difficulties; any attempt to actually "*derive* concepts like space, time [...] from history and to reduce them to social phenomena" (ibid.) is self-undermining. Adorno argues this when discussing Durkheim's theory that pure logical categories and forms of space and time become embedded in consciousness through social organisation; Durkheim's explanation is self-undermining because it employs the concepts of time and space to explain the origin of our consciousness of time and space (it refers to arrangements of land, and awareness of ancestry and generational difference, so also implies that these intuitions of time and space existed before the concepts of them originated) (Adorno, 1959a:169). Adorno is committed to tracing concepts to their social roots, without excluding the possibility that, in order for us to have instituted and applied certain concepts through social conditions, there might be "an element of constitutive subjectivity which ensure that people experience things in one way rather than another" (*HF* 62).

Much of what Adorno says on these matters about an alternative history or identifying an origin, is for the purpose of highlighting the contradictions we come to, and that philosophy is forced to steer between these different routes. We could say that the lesson Adorno

seems to read in Hegel is that we need a kind of immanent account of how normativity gets started, starting on the inside of what we know about (such as language); we can only understand an individual's relation to society (subject in relation to object) and *vice versa* "in historical concretion" (1963:45). Then, in opposition to Hegel, Adorno shows we cannot offer a concrete theory of self-consciousness; we can only think of self-consciousness with reference to identity-thinking and thus to our antagonistic mediation with objects and other people and with the way this has played out through social domination in history. With this impasse, the promising route looks to be continuing to understand and reflect on history, finding this middle-ground that concentrates on how domination has played out, for critical understanding of the ways in which our contemporary practices keep us dominated, with the ultimate hope of a breakthrough.

6. Implications for Historical Investigation

Given that Adorno rejects Hegel's understanding of history as the realisation of freedom, self-consciousness and reason, what can we conclude that he takes from Hegel to sharpen the idea of a middle ground between the 'cult of the facts' and 'theories of history'?

We can say that for both Adorno and Hegel, 'doing history is history's doing'. When we do history, the limitations are to some degree historical, and the need to do it comes from history, but this need is construed differently. For Hegel, the course of history has ensured that our problems of the contextual present can be comprehended and overcome; this is an assumption we bring to historical interpretation. Adorno's approach contains the opposite assumption: deeper self-critique is needed, because history is characterised by domination of the universal over objects and subjects, which entails that our

reasoning is not truly rational; it is self-contradictory, and depends on its antithesis.

However, we can see how Adorno thinks Hegel serves as an antidote to positivist approaches to socio-historical investigation. As we saw in the introduction, Adorno characterises positivism as largely assuming that reality is just "spontaneous individual phenomena, the individual acts of individual human beings" (*HF* 18). By seeking systematic, "scientific unity" (DE 7), positivists apply their universals (categories) to disparate particulars, which are related in ways these categories do not capture; the norms of a socio-historical context will affect people's experience and interactions, and will have explanatory power in understanding historical change. Furthermore, as Rose puts it, positivist sociology can accurately describe society's appearance, but not how the "properties which it classifies to society" were formed[55] (1978:78). Social categories contribute to treating people instrumentally (*HF* 32) and conceal the actual functioning of past and present society.

In the introduction of this thesis, I suggested we could clarify Adorno's accusation that dialectical materialism erred for reading necessity into history, after looking at how Hegel influences Adorno's views about epistemology. Marx and Engels saw philosophy's goal as philosophising about living individuals: the "material activity and the material intercourse of men", and argued that life determines consciousness rather than the other way around (1846:180). As Lukács put it, the premise of dialectical materialism is that, "[it] is not men's consciousness that determines their existence, but on the contrary, their social existence that determines their consciousness" (1923: 'What is Orthodox Marxism?').

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[55] For detailed discussion about Adorno's views on genesis and validity, and critique of relativism, see Foster (2007:94-111); Adorno does not rule out that there might be a "timeless essence" to logical forms, when he focuses on the social functions of our logical categories.

Adorno accuses dialectical materialists, through their argument for the "reality of society as opposed to psychological subjectivism" (*HF* 23) of:

(i) ending up one-sided (society as the real 'thing' over the epistemic subject, or knower);

(ii) concluding that history has a necessary structure to it, a "relapse into the dogmatic assertion of a history that existed in itself" (ibid.), and

(iii) making this mistake because of failing to enter into the "problems of constitution" of the epistemic subject (ibid.).

Adorno seems to be reading dialectical materialism as committed to the idea that consciousness is determined by socio-material factors without reciprocity. That is, the causality is one-sided, from technological change (and the roles in the division of labour dictated by them) to consciousness. This is akin to the way in which Danto describes historical materialism as Methodological Socialism:

> [T]here is a one-way interaction between social processes and at least some psychological processes, so that what we think, and how we act, are to be explained by reference to our relations *vis-à-vis* the prevailing systems of production; and whatever it is that causes changes in the system of production, it is *not* something which is brought about by individual human action. (Danto, 1965:269)

In other words, this method assumes that although it is necessary for the sustenance of a system of production that individuals think and act in particular ways, facts about the system of production, or changes to the system of production, are not to be explained with facts about a single individual's behaviour. The structures are predetermined by the

previous ones[56]. To understand a society means understanding social role; to understand an individual's participation in society and historical change means understanding the social group they are part of.

With his claim that Marx and Engels postulate the reality of society over individuals, Adorno could be accusing them of equating personhood to social roles, thus allowing that the true essence of humans will be realised through the passage of structures of production. It seems that, for Adorno, the Marxist methodology of interpreting history ends up committing Hegel's errors without retaining some of Hegel's (as Adorno reads it) insights, so leads to a false ontology. Examining what can (and what cannot) be said about the epistemic subject's constitution (as we have seen) is needed to discover both that there is more that is socially mediated (basic concept-use) than Marx analysed, but that not all explanatory power can be ascribed to social roles. There are particularities of individual experience that interplay with, but are not completely determined by, the norms they follow. Adorno takes this as a lesson learnt from Hegel: individuals are "socially preformed" yet also "nothing is realized except in and through individuals" (Adorno, 1963:45).

7. Implications for Philosophy

Hegel, thinks Adorno, teaches we have to acknowledge that falsity mediates the world, experience is laden with negativity, and this cannot be considered or made good (Adorno, 1963:76). We have seen that Adorno means by this that our experience is constituted by an incorrect subject-object relation, which involves negation of objects, and a sense of this negativity that we cannot express.

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[56] I am not implying this is a comprehensive summary of dialectical materialism, but rather suggesting it helps clarify Adorno's criticism.

For Adorno, Hegel rightly reflected on the relationship between philosophy and the knowledge it critiques: between "philosophical, critical consciousness" and "the consciousness engaged in direct knowledge of its object, the consciousness that is the object of criticism" (1963:71). Hegel recognised that examining the limits of ordinary consciousness implicates our reflection on our philosophical mode of thinking. Both thinkers describe ordinary consciousness and philosophy as dialectical, but it means something different for each (which at times is confusing since Adorno sometimes presents his version as one that is also Hegel's[57]). For Adorno, the dialectical universal-particular relationship in ordinary thought is negative, in the ways I described in Section 2. Establishing this involves acknowledging the inherent limitations to the modes of thought available to philosophy. For Adorno, philosophy as (negative) dialectics is a constant awareness of the contradictions between thought and reality and acknowledgement of our role in creating these contradictions (*ND* 144-145); since we cannot assume the conceptual contradictions we identify cleanly map to reality, our attempts to resolve them will be futile (Adorno, 1963:78)[58].

For Hegel, discovering the limits to individual determinations of thought points to the presence of something that transcends those limits: a conception of reason as processual and social, positively dialectical, as we have seen. The consciousness discovering this, in Hegel's mind, "posits itself as infinite" (Adorno, 1963:72); it comes to

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[57] Finlayson argues, for example, that Adorno's dialectics—i.e. "A dialectical transition without uplift and ascent, without these gains"—is "simply not *dialectical in Hegel's sense*" (2015:1150).

[58] Compare with Lukács' semi-realist picture, in the mode of Engels: "But we maintain that in the case of social reality these contradictions are not a sign of the imperfect understanding of society; on the contrary, they belong to *the nature of reality itself and to the nature of capitalism*. When the totality is known they will not be transcended and *cease* to be contradictions. Quite the reverse. they will be seen to be necessary contradictions arising out of the antagonisms of this system of production" (1923: 'What is Orthodox Marxism?').

see that it has transcended ordinary thought's limits, making explicit what ordinary thought has not, about what thought involves, and finds itself as the (at least potential) resolution of all contradictions.

While Adorno disputes this, we can understand why he considers Hegel to show we must take seriously that thought happens in historical experience (*ND* 138), that every thought is about something spatio-temporal: "Philosophical thinking crystallizes in the particular, in that which is defined in space and time" (*ND* 138). Philosophy's object(ive) and modes of investigation must be sensitive to how "Nothing can be known that is not in experience" (Hegel, 1807:§802; quoted in Adorno, 1963:53)[59]. Adorno is claiming philosophy cannot purport to deal with abstract questions, and must refer to so-called contingencies and past and present lived experiences[60]. To investigate goodness or freedom means starting by looking at experience; the content of those concepts[61]. Adorno's reading of Hegel supports his conception that philosophy has historicised needs; our experience determines, in some way, what needs expression, and what expression involves. Philosophy is limited by the dominant mode of rationality, but needs to seek appropriate expression of objects and individuals, while examining its own limits.

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[59] We should note Hegel continues in that passage to describe experience as the substance—Spirit—and Spirit as a movement of cognition through which the in-itself becomes for-itself, consciousness becomes self-consciousness. Hegel's notion of experience is intrinsically tied to his notion of the absolute. What Adorno thinks Hegel's philosophy "expresses as philosophy" (i.e. the above claim about experience) is opposed to what Adorno does not consider essential: Hegel's logic and metaphysics (Adorno, 1963:53). Adorno repeatedly makes clear he is rejecting Hegel's pure logic and metaphysics. He claims that reducing Hegel's thought to "experience" may "prove fatal to the claim of identity" (1963:57). Yet, this does not stop Adorno from citing Hegel's logic and metaphysics for his own purposes.

[60] I have touched on a mere fraction of Adorno's critique of philosophers and different areas of philosophy. Moreover, Hegel is not the only thinker influencing Adorno on these matters, but I aimed to zone in on how Adorno uses Hegel on these questions.

[61] For Adorno, as indicated in Chapter II, and to which we will return in Chapter IV, this will lead us to see there is unfreedom and evil where we took there to be freedom and goodness.

Conclusion

I aimed to show that Adorno's interpretation and usage of Hegel supports his critique of conceptual thought. I hope to have exposed some reasons for Adorno crediting Hegel with demonstrating important ways thought and conceptual meaning are socio-historical conditioned (Adorno, 1959:148). Adorno seems to develop from Hegel that contingency and normativity interplay ineliminably throughout history, so accuses Hegel, on what he takes to be Hegel's own terms, of creating a false dichotomy when delineating what is contingent and what is rational (or necessary) in history.

To some degree, Adorno agrees we can think of the normative sphere of a society as the 'spirit' of the time, and he sometimes employs Hegel's term *Geist* to describe an overarching movement of history, as a history of universals dominating individuals. Since Hegel makes freedom constitutive for *Geist*, what Adorno means is not the same thing. For Adorno, we must view history as "nothing but the dreadful antagonistic state of affairs" (*HF* 27). He accuses Hegel's philosophy of betraying its critical side with "a positivist side, in the sense that it tries to 'fit in', […] he would like to adapt himself to the world as it is" (*HF* 43; see also *ND* 158).

At this stage, we have seen how, for Adorno, our (false, irrational) conceptual thinking involves domination: universals dominate objects and individuals. Philosophy needs to proceed, with awareness of its historicity (its mediation at all moments with objects), by prioritising the object in thought, and prioritising individuals against the dominant norms in history. In Chapter IV I examine how Adorno suggests this can be done through the approach of thinking in constellations.

IV. Constellations

This chapter is about Adorno's idea of thinking in constellations, which he discusses in *ND* 162-166. I aim to show how this approach is a proximal solution to the problems of epistemology and expression that have been examined so far. Adorno's discussion is rich, but somewhat confusing; he resists setting out a programmatic methodology. Specifically, confusions arise about what kind of objects of cognition he is referring to, whether his claims are descriptive or prescriptive, and whether this is a negative or positive method. He oscillates between these angles. I attempt to resolve these confusions by delineating the different lines of thought that I consider to be going on in parallel in the passages. I will make distinctions between types of object, and show the ways the metaphor 'constellation' is supposed to work with each. This will help establish whether and where Adorno is describing the object (i.e. whether an object is a 'constellation'), where he is describing the subject's pre-existing representation of the object (i.e. whether at least some of our pre-existing ideas are constellations), and where he is prescribing the creation of a new constellation. I will show that thinking in constellations is negative insofar as it further uncovers the inadequacy of our thought and the wrongness of the world, but positive in that it is an available alternative to identity-thinking for engaging with objects and the social world. I will establish what this tells us about Adorno's philosophy of history and method in history in general.

1. Thought-Models

To begin with, I will examine Adorno's notion of thought-models (discussed in the introduction to *ND*). This is because I consider that Adorno wants us to think of constellations as thought-models; both are presented as the appropriate alternative to identity-thinking, and the passage on thought-models tells us more about the criteria such an alternative must fulfil. This will lay groundwork to help show Adorno is not using constellations to make metaphysical claims (which precludes an otherwise plausible interpretation, as will be discussed in Section 4).

Adorno discusses 'thought-models' as a way to make "binding statements without a system" (*ND* 29). He describes a thought-model as follows:

> A model covers the specific, and more than the specific, without letting it evaporate in its more general super-concept. Philosophical thinking is the same as thinking in models; negative dialectics is an ensemble of analyses of models. (*ND* 29)

At once, this tells us a thought-model performs something that identity-thinking does (i.e. abstracts, generalises), but a thought-model does not take the particular to be identical to its abstraction or generalisation. Thinking in models is to be different from identity-thinking, yet not free from it (Adorno has said such freedom would involve unimaginable socio-historical change). So, thought-models must involve self-reflection on their own identity-thinking and how that mediates knowledge. But Adorno tells us thought-models also involve explicitly aiming for what is implicit in concept use - an aim to think about the quality or uniqueness of a thing.

Somehow they get us closer to reflecting on the contents of our experience, without categorising or essentialising them. How?

Instead of defining exactly what a thought-model is supposed to be, Adorno discusses the intention behind it and what it will achieve. I will now examine these, in order to establish some features of thought-models that constellations fulfil.

Adorno thinks the intention behind thought-models was present in the French Enlightenment (*ND* 29), in its hailing of reason over myth, tradition and domination. We can infer that this shared intention is to use critical reasoning to dispel myths that prevent us from getting to truth or objectivity. It is surprising that Adorno sees the precedent there, given his critique of enlightenment rationality considered in Chapters II and III, but this is compatible with his claim that there is potential in enlightenment thought to be recuperated (*DE* xi).

Adorno here states, "Encyclopedic thinking - rationally organized and yet discontinuous, unsystematic, loose - expressed the self-critical spirit of reason" (*ND* 29). By contrast, in *Dialectic of Enlightenment,* Adorno and Horkheimer used the encyclopedic approach as the very image of systematicity and identity-thinking, domination of objects and quantification of reality, with its classifications in taxonomies. This must mean that for Adorno, those negative aspects were either extrinsic to encyclopedic thinking, or the latter had two contradictory driving beliefs or attitudes: one being the problematic beliefs about human rationality and the systematisation and control of nature, and the other the self-critical spirit of reason. It seems we have to think of the inception of this form of encyclopedic thinking as an expression of self-critical reason, yet other interests secured its survival (the wider enlightenment trends and beliefs; instrumental rationality).

Since Adorno is alluding to the French Encyclopedists (Diderot and D'Alembert, 1751-1766), it is helpful to turn to their stated intentions with the *Encyclopédie*. Diderot writes:

> The goal of an encyclopedia is to assemble all the knowledge scattered on the surface of the earth, to demonstrate the general system to the people with whom we live, and to transmit it to the people who will come after us, so that the works of centuries past is not useless to the centuries which follow, that our descendants, by becoming more learned, may become more virtuous and happier, and that we do not die without having merited being part of the human race. (Diderot and D'Alembert, 1751-1766: 5:635, translation in Blom, 2005: 139)

Famously, the *Encyclopédie* begins with a taxonomy (Diderot and D'Alembert, 1751-1766: 'Front Matter'[62]), with three core (man-made) categories of thought: Memory, Reason and Imagination. Adorno must think that this striving for comprehensivity and rational ordering, what Diderot above calls a system, is not an unwavering glorification of systematicity. Presumably, Adorno sees it as provisional and self-critical. It could be that he views the *Encyclopédie* as correctly revealing that all those branches of knowledge are man-made models of reality. Perhaps he sees this as a self-critique of reason, because instead of being ordered by nature or by religion, the knowledge is ordered by kind; this challenged religious claims to validity and truth (see discussion in Cassirer, 1951:134f), but also of any other sole discipline or method's claim to ultimate authority. D'Alembert described the work as summarising all knowledge, from the viewpoint of looking down on a labyrinth of all branches of human ideas, observing "the points that separate or unite them" and "sometimes the secret routes bringing

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[62]https://encyclopedie.uchicago.edu/content/syst%C3%A8me-figur%C3%A9-des-con naissances-humaines

them together" (Diderot and D'Alembert, 1751-1766:xiv 'Discours Préliminaire des Éditeurs' [translation my own])[63]. The separation into different spheres of enquiry emphasises the variety of approaches and frameworks we have for thinking about the world, which converge in various ways. Diderot's emphasis on sharing knowledge, passing down these models of thought for future generations to use it, expresses a spirit of open-mindedness, provisionality, suggestiveness and choice, rather than obedience.

What, then, does this tell us about the thought-models Adorno is advocating? How are they created and applied? We may consider the distinction between model and theory[64] in science or economics. A theory is a set of well-tested hypotheses with general application that unifies a range of observations, whereas scientific or economic models are used to understand particular phenomena; models are intentionally constructs, guides, representations, or illustrations to help approach something that cannot be experienced directly.

Recall that Adorno says thought-models are supposed to be 'binding', but 'without a system'; their bindingness or validity will not require conforming to the logic or rules of argumentation set out by a system. Put another way, the thought-models do not have to be consistent with one another. Then each could have their own criteria for bindingness. Or rather, the criteria will be their object. Adorno seems to be suggesting that thought-models are created by probing at an individual object of cognition and building a representation, or fiction, of it, according to what the object requires. A model will be binding if the

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[63] This relates to Adorno seeing Hegel's history of spirit as an attempt to show the interrelatedness and progressive, rational system of all spheres of human thought. For Adorno, as we have seen, Hegel's is an erroneous affirmative view of history, but he considers Hegel's insight to be that different spheres of society do interrelate, and each era, or *Geist,* has certain possibilities for thought, determined by the predecessor.

[64] This is not to say there is consensus across or even within disciplines on the distinction, but this is one common specification (see Goldfarb and Ratner, 2008).

object has regulated its creation (which suggests we can characterise the subject's involvement as a critical reflective judgment). However, we will see when examining constellations that Adorno seems to want models for some objects to be transient and unrepeatable, whereas he gives others a stronger idea of bindingness, of a regulative function, as they are created in order to be applied in the future.

Adorno claims that approaching an object with the aim to make a thought-model is an "intervention" to allow "What is waiting in the objects themselves [...] to come to speak" (*ND* 29). The subject's involvement, with the concepts it brings, is necessary, to instigate an interaction with the object that will give the object priority. The thinker is not altogether passive, but must let the object present itself. This is a way of thinking that is not identity-thinking (although it certainly looks to be identifying and is certainly thinking).

Adorno also claims that "every theory that is brought to bear on the phenomena, should come to rest in the phenomena" (*ND* 29). We have to understand that our theories mediate our identification of the object of our cognition. The thought-model could then be said to mediate between the theory (the general) it unavoidably brings, and the particular.

Finally, Adorno claims the "end" of philosophical theory "lies in its realization" (*ND* 29). Does this mean thought-models are the full realisation and end of philosophical theory? Surely this is not the full story. Adorno has repeatedly argued that total socio-historical change is needed for truth to be possible. The use of thought-models and constellations is driven by that primary goal, but does not fully achieve it; it is a route to understanding rather than achieving truth.

2. What are Constellations for?

Adorno sets the scene to the passage on constellations with a discussion of universality in individuality, with reference to people and art. When introducing constellations, he writes,

> The unifying moment survives without a negation of negation, but also without delivering itself to abstraction as a supreme principle [...without][65] step-by-step progression from the concepts to a more general cover concept. Instead, the concepts enter into a constellation. (*ND* 162/162)

This tells us the following: there are wrong ways to show that an individual thing is in unity with what is initially posited as different to it. One of these wrong methods is Hegelian logic of 'negation of negation', to which Adorno is here presumably attributing the following steps: (i) we observe that the determination of an individual thing involves negating an other; (ii) we then negate the thing's individuality, because of its internal dependency on its other; (iii) we achieve some third category, a higher synthesis of the two: a positive resulting from this negation of negation.

Another incorrect way is applying a single concept, an umbrella term, to cover what unifies the things. We then know that, for Adorno: (a) thinking in constellations allows us to at least begin to understand a particular object; (b) understanding a particular object, zooming in on

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[65] I omit "It survives because there is no [...]", because the original German is "dass nicht von den Begriffen im Stufengang zum allgemeineren Oberbegriff fortgeschritten wird" (*ND, Frankfurt* 162). My translation: "[...] does not do this by step-by step progression [...]"

it, involves relating it to other things (but not in the way identity-thinking, or Hegel, erroneously does).

As I will now propose, Adorno has in mind different kinds of objects of cognition in this passage, which are not all explicitly stated, and for which the idea of constellations does different work[66]. They are as follows:

    A. Art

    B. Physical objects

    C. Socio-historical objects

    D. Abstract or Moral Concepts or Ideas

    E. People (covered in Chapter V)

3. Constellations in Art

Here, constellations are:

    (i) an approach to observing the universals in an artwork that appears unique;

    (ii) things that some art produces, demonstrating the ineffable.

Adorno claims that artworks which initially look radically different are, after all, actually participating in some shared normativity; there is universality in their supposed individuality (*ND* 37). Adorno is referring to artworks that purport to be unique but ultimately are predictable, follow norms and have only an illusory freedom. In one example Adorno discusses jazz:

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[66] My distinction of objects is for explanatory purposes rather than ascribing a corresponding metaphysical or logical order to Adorno's discussion.

the perennial sameness of jazz consists not in a basic organization of the material within which the imagination can roam freely and without inhibition, as within an articulate language, but rather in the utilization of certain well-defined tricks, formulas and clichés: to the exclusion of everything else. (1997:122)

This sort of art's ostensible resistance to, or subversion of, norms is (Adorno thinks) thoroughly rule-regulated; what sounds different is actually the same trick or formula. The experience of the whole is not affected if its parts are swapped, unlike a piece by Beethoven, for example (see Adorno, 1963:34, 163, 205-6, 217). It is then not entirely a mistake to use further universals to examine this object. In fact, it is necessary to do so, in order to understand its illusion of individuality and freedom.

However, Adorno does also think there are artworks that offer genuine resistance to the evils of identity-thinking and cultural commodification. For example, he thinks Kafka's texts, and certain kinds of avant-garde art, represent the intuition Adorno thinks we all have of the awfulness of the world even if that is not what the work is 'about'; it is an ineffable representation, "showing and not saying" (Finlayson, 2002:16 and 8). Although these works of art that qualify as resistance participate in typicality (are created within a certain remit, have a basic orientating structure for the viewer or listener, and follow theoretical rules), the experience of the artwork as a whole transcends discernable norms; it creates a unique whole, a constellation of concepts or parts[67].

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[67] See Bowie, 2013: ch6 for detailed examination of how aesthetics and philosophy relate in Adorno.

4. Physical Objects

Here, constellations are methods or modes of cognition.

For approaching physical objects, constellations are a way of thinking about them not head-on, but through the prism of a collage of concepts. To grasp this, Adorno asks us to look at how ordinary language works:

> Language offers no mere system of signs for cognitive functions. Where it appears essentially as a language, where it becomes a form of representation, it will not define its concepts. It lends objectivity to them by the relation into which it puts the concepts, centered about a thing. Language thus serves the intention of the concept to express completely what it means. (*ND* 162)

In the previous chapter, I suggested we should understand Adorno as subscribing to a theory closely related to the inferentialism Brandom attributes to Hegel. That gave us a picture of the connection Adorno presupposes between language, concept application or institution, and intersubjectivity or sociality, and helped frame his reading and critique of Hegel. We can then understand the above quotation as Adorno reminding us that language institutes determinate conceptual content (objectivity), rather than defining pre-existing concepts. Language allows novel ideas, new judgments, to be expressed, by applying universals (concepts) to particulars and these can be communicated and shared.

Even though, as we have examined, Adorno thinks that as soon as we make a thought or utterance, we lose the qualitative aspect of the object

we have judged, Adorno is hinting that we might be able to retrieve something of it with constellations.

We have the following resources to hand:

(i) We may use several concepts to try to describe one object.

(ii) When we apply one concept, lots of others are implied or excluded. The thing for us, when we judge it as *x,* stands in relations of inference and consequence to other things.

A constellation utilises but subverts those aspects of language, to "illuminate the specific side of the object" (*ND* 162). The aim is to disintegrate "the prepared and objectified form of the concepts which the cognitive subject faces" (*ND* 145). Constellations involve striving to stay with the object, as it were, allowing the object to challenge the rules that are being used to approach it. Constellations are to approach the object without any other end in mind, acknowledging the object as prior to our determination, while self-critiquing the determinations we bring to it.

This is what Adorno means when he says constellations gather concepts around an object so that they "potentially determine the object's interior" and "attain, in thinking, what was necessarily excised from thinking" (*ND* 162). Constellations alone, he writes, "represent from without what the concept has cut away: the "more" which the concept is equally desirous and incapable of being" (*ND* 162).

The metaphor of constellations comes from Adorno's close colleague and friend Walter Benjamin. In his work, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama,* Benjamin wrote, "Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars" (Benjamin, 1928:34). However, Adorno distances himself from

Benjamin's theory in this instance[68]. Adorno feels his own reconception of the metaphor of constellations is substantially closer to Weber, as will be explored in the subsequent sections. Adorno claims constellations in Benjamin are used for "metaphysical inquiries" that "take the very concept of truth for a constellation" (*ND* 164). For Adorno, the constellation is not the truth of the object's structure or essence. However, there are still similarities between Benjamin's understanding of allegory and Adorno proposing the possibility of taking concepts out of their established fixity, to arrange them in a way that better expresses the object. As Foster summarises, for Benjamin "Allegory 'shatters' language, in order to give it, through its fragments, a transformed and elevated expression" (2007:69)[69].

Adorno offers the analogy of using a combination of numbers to unlock a "well-guarded safe-deposit box"; the constellation is the combination and the lock is the concept we have initially used to identify the object; "theoretical thought circles the concept it would like to unseal") (*ND* 163). Adorno explains that this means telling a special kind of history about the object. The way to theorise while being immersed in the object, is creating a constellation of concepts that represents the object's "sedimented history" (*ND* 163).

He writes:

> This history is in the individual thing and outside it; it is something encompassing in which the individual has its place. Becoming aware of the constellation in which a thing stands is

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[68] See Bowie, 2013:54-55 for Benjamin's influence on Adorno regarding the truth-content of constellations in art.

[69] See also Foster's argument that we should understand Adorno as having a theory of language directed at the recovery of spiritual experience (2007:26-29) and particularly the role of the underexamined influence of Bergson on Adorno therein (2007:113-135). See also Rose for discussion of Adorno's use of irony to disrupt language by positing extremes and creating antinomies, influenced by Nietzsche (2014:15-34).

tantamount to deciphering the constellation which, having come to be, it bears within it. The *chorismos* of without and within is historically qualified in turn. The history locked in the object can only be delivered by a knowledge mindful of the historic positional value of the object in its relation to other objects - by the actualization and concentration of something which is already known and is transformed by that knowledge. Cognition of the object in its constellation is cognition of the process stored in the object. (*ND* 163)

From that passage, we can take the following:

1. The object participates in a history (history outside it).
2. The object has a history (history is within it).
3. The theoretical distinction between what is inside and outside the thing, is itself historically qualified; i.e. identifying an object as an individual thing with boundaries among others, is a conceptualisation dependent on the socio-historical context.
4. Knowing the history in 1 is the same as knowing the history in 2, which implies that the history in which the thing participates is its own history; it is internal to it and the thing consists of (entirely or in part) its history.

To view the object as historically sedimented means understanding its "place" in the socio-historical context; its role, the uses and meanings we give to it: its "historic positional value" (*ND* 163). This historical sedimentation is why our conceptualisation of the object faces us as objective, as something given. O'Connor describes this as having to think of the object as a "complex of concepts" which "are acquired and accumulated in the history of the object's position in what Adorno terms the social totality" (2004:59).

The constellation takes shape along various dimensions. We create a picture of the historical context, understanding the object's role and meaning in society in relation to the roles and meanings of other objects. Another dimension is tracing the historical path of the various concepts applied to this object in the past, or to other objects (when that determines the concepts applied to this one). Together this models the object, as if it were an entity constituted by our classificatory activities, theoretical and practical, that have made us experience it in this way.

Adorno claims Hegel's term 'concrete' "takes note" of the need to use constellations in this way. As Adorno understands Hegel's terminology, to say a thing is concrete is to say "the thing itself is its context, not its pure selfhood" (*ND* 162). Adorno is agreeing with Hegel that the thought of 'this individual thing' is internally related to other objects in our conceptual framework, as we saw in Chapter III. What is involved in the object being *so* for us, is its past and present conceptual relations to other objects. However, as the previous chapter demonstrated Adorno sees, and criticises, Hegel reducing all objectivity to consciousness[70].

For Adorno, throughout the constellatory-contextual history of this physical object, the nonidentical (to each concept-application) is participating, but was cut away from thinking, by thinking. This will be negatively, or potentially, represented in the history. It is plausible, then, that the historical constellation we form for a physical object of our cognition would involve concepts such as materiality, sensation, impulse, and their genesis would be examined.

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[70] Following this comes Adorno statement that Hegel failed to fully appreciating the power of language, as examined in Chapter III, Section 3.

In addition, we could read Adorno as suggesting we tell a different, but complementary, kind of history, construed as internal to the object. We can allow ourselves to think about the object's history independently of our classifications to model its uniqueness. This invites a sense of wonder, of allowing ourselves to be surprised by the object, giving it life by telling a story about it that makes it different from other objects with the same names. The constellation would be of all the different objects this one uniquely relates together; it has a unique story in physical reality. We might use scientific vocabulary to express these relations, but acknowledge that we are modelling, indicating and imagining. The histories of an artefact may involve appreciating the domination of humans over natural resources: much of its history might be the story of it being manipulated and quantified. The contemplation of the history of an organism might be some kind of aesthetic contemplation.

Stone suggests something like this in her interpretation of constellations (2014a:59). However, she gives a stronger reading to the idea that the uniqueness, the nonidentity of the object should be conceived of as a history. She seems to attribute a more realist picture to Adorno, in which this history sufficiently explains the object: the object is nothing more than that historical relational thing. So, on her reading, there is a constellation on the subject's side (a mode of approach), and a constellation on the object's side (a reality). The subject's constellation is its use of more and more concepts to describe the object's uniqueness (Stone, 2014a:59). It is a way of describing the object and each object will have a different constellation, because no two will have exactly the same collection of concepts. Stone reminds us that for Adorno the uniqueness of a thing precludes it being captured by concepts, but this can indirectly express the qualitative differences

between objects[71]. As another dimension of the constellation, this seems right, given what was said about language above. The difference between one object and another might be said to be a difference of concept *x*, but when it enters the constellation (the thought of the object), that concept takes on a qualitative difference from its application anywhere else, because of its relation to the other parts that make up the whole.

As mentioned, on the object's side, Stone claims the object *is* a constellation, in the sense of a unique history of its relations with other objects: the object "is *itself* a constellation of different past relations with other objects, all of which have shaped it" (2014a:58). An object has a history which "makes the object the unique thing that it is" (2014a:59). If Stone is right, then she has an answer to the following question she justifiably asks: how can a constellation "illuminate the non-identical element in things while illuminating it only partially"? (2014a:58).

Her answer can be exposited as follows:
1. The object is unique.
2. The object's uniqueness lies in its history.
3. Constellations illuminate the history.
4. Since the history is still happening, the object is at no point complete.
5. Thus when Adorno says concepts are limited, they are limited "*because* objects are incomplete" (Stone, 2014a:60).
6. Adorno does not himself make that explicit.
7. Instead Adorno emphasises that concepts are "limited in regard to the objects" (ibid.).

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[71] In a later section, 'The Object's Preponderance', Adorno writes we can "make progressive qualitative distinctions between things which in themselves are indirect" (*ND* 184).

8. 5 and 7 are not incompatible (but the interpretative difficulty is that Adorno emphasises the former).

9. Then, a constellation illuminates the nonidentical, because the nonidentical is a constellation, and since the nonidentical is ever developing, the constellation will never fully capture it; it will only partially capture it.

However, our examination so far shows that this answer cannot work; for Adorno, constellations do not mirror or reproduce the physical object's nonidentity. The constellation lies on the side of the subject's representation, and it is a vehicle for approaching the object. It is the cognitive structure, rather than a metaphysics.

Rather than creating an accurate causal story that will tell us everything there is to know about the object, this kind of constellation would involve thinking of the object *as if* its uniqueness consisted of that history. It has a more negative function: to hint at what we might be missing in our experience of the world, rather than fully rectifying it.

Cook plausibly suggests that constellations should include concepts that indicate what nature could be, if it were the case that we had not done damage to it, or if the damage were ameliorated (2014:108).

Then, constellations for physical objects include:
1. Histories of the object: (i) the history of our conceptualisation; (ii) a more imagined narrative of its relationship with other objects.
2. Representing qualitative differences with richer concepts.
3. Using concepts to consider what the object might have been instead, to understand objectivity as having potential and possibility.

5. Constellations for Socio-Historical Objects

Here, constellations are akin to a Weberian ideal type.

Adorno claims his strategy of thinking in constellations with regards to historical objects is heavily influenced by Max Weber. Although before Weber, it was philosophers—"Kant, Hegel, Nietzsche"—not social scientists, who were occupied with the problem of "defining historical concepts" (*ND* 165), it is Weber who teaches us "[h]ow objects can be unlocked by their constellation" (*ND* 164). My aim here is to focus on Adorno's interpretation and usage of Weber, about which he makes several separate claims in the passage on constellations.

I aim to explain the important elements that help us understand what thinking in constellations means for historical objects. Adorno suggests Weber's thinking is a "third possibility beyond the alternative of positivism and idealism" (*ND* 166). We should understand this as referring to alternative historical or social scientific methods. That is, Weber's ideal-types (or Adorno's version of them) can be understood as constellations, used for understanding socio-historical phenomena. This, then, is a promising candidate for the middle ground between the 'cult of the facts' and 'theories of history'.

I will examine how this method is at work in Adorno's notion of capitalism, although Adorno does not discuss the details of Weber's conception of capitalism as fully as one might hope. I will also indicate what other historical methods ideal-types suggest.

First, we should clarify some claims Adorno makes about Weber, to see what kind of balance he thinks Weber strikes:

1. Weber's approach is positivist.
2. Weber's is a "subjectivist epistemology" (*ND* 164)
3. Weber is a nominalist to some degree.
4. Weber's theory is still "object-directed" (*ND* 164).

Adorno acknowledges that Weber was concerned with problems of objectivity, and the value-ladenness of our theories. Weber criticised unreflecting positivism, but still strived for an objective science and thought it possible (see Adorno, 1969b:117). Adorno must think that the critical side of Weber's positivism and nominalism is preserved in Weber's notion of ideal-types.

Weber can plausibly be considered to take a nominalist approach, when emphasising that the subject matter in social science is particulars, not universals, and when his analysis operates at the level of individual human beings' psychology and action. However, Weber does also operate at the socio-structural, organisation level in his political sociology (see e.g. Weber, 1949). Both are needed for the goal of sociology, which, he states, is an "interpretive understanding of social action[72] and [...] a causal explanation of its course and consequence" (Weber, 1922:4). Adorno claims Weber's approach is "object-directed", because *something* of "the nature of the thing" comes through in his nominalism (*ND* 164). Adorno must mean that Weber's nominalism is conscious of the limits of universals (the subject's concepts and classifications). Yet, when Weber couples his nominalistic approach with the structural analysis of things like capitalism, through the method of 'ideal-types', he shows we should consider individuals as functions of universals[73].

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[72] For Weber, 'action' means an individual's behaviour that is meaningful to him/her, and social action is action motivated by the expected behaviour of another individual (Weber, 1922: 'Definitions of Sociology and Social Action' [no pagination]).
[73] This addresses the universal/individual tension described in Section 2.

a. What are Ideal-Types?

Adorno understands Weber's ideal-types as "aids in approaching an object" (*ND* 164). He sees them as constellations, since they are models that use a cluster of other concepts to express what one aims at (*ND* 165-166). A socio-historical phenomenon, such as capitalism, requires this approach. Adorno refers to the opening of Chapter 2 of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905). There, Weber states that we cannot aim for a definition, in the scientific sense, of a socio-historical concept like 'capitalism'. He writes,

> If any object can be found to which this term [capitalism] can be applied with any understandable meaning, it can only be an historical individual, i.e. a complex of elements associated in historical reality which we unite into a conceptual whole from the standpoint of their cultural significance. (1905:13)

The value of ideal-types depends on rejecting the proposition that "knowledge of historical reality can or should be a "presuppositionless" copy of "objective facts" (Weber, 1949:92). We can make an ideal-type of capitalism, by taking "certain traits [...] from the empirical reality of our culture" and bringing them "together into a unified ideal-construct" (Weber, 1949:91).

Weber writes:

> In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia* [...] When carefully applied, those concepts are particularly useful in research and exposition. (1949:90)

As Adorno puts it, we can form an ideal-type of capitalism that orients concepts like acquisitiveness and profit-motive with structural or societal norms and organisation, such as free labor, the rationalisation of family life, legal systems, government organisation, bookkeeping and so on (*ND* 166). Together, these create a thought of capitalism, that gets at its quality, its "spiritual substance" (*ND* 165). Capitalism should not then be seen as an aggregate of these quantums, but rather as referring to a force, or process, at work in reality, represented by the relations of these concepts to one another (*ND* 165).

Now, this sounds like constellations as ideal-types are used in a more realist way than with physical objects. That is, it seems this mode of representation mirrors or reproduces the relational or constellational structure of the object (capitalism). This looks like a metaphysics, reducing a would-be substance to a relational complex; the object is in-itself this historical relational entity. If this is the case, this collage-like representation takes us back to identity-thinking in some way. However, both Adorno and Weber emphasise the provisional nature of the model; it is a path towards understanding the process in which all these elements and their relations to one another seem implicated. Yet, it still does appear that Adorno is committed to a critical knowledge of social relations that is secure and genuine in a way that other areas of knowledge are not.

Adorno thinks Weber's ideal-type of capitalism omitted key aspects: the "capitalist system's increasingly integrative trend, the fact that its elements entwine into a more and more total context of functions" (*ND* 166). So, the concepts that Adorno elsewhere argues are functional elements of the rationalised social totality, such as class antagonisms and the culture industry, must be added to the ideal-typical construct of capitalism.

b. Ideal-types as causes

For Adorno, since the ideal-type of capitalism gives us a picture that standard definitions of the economic system do not, it allows us to better understand patterns or events that recur.

An exclusively causal explanation for social phenomena, Adorno argues, would confine the exploration of the object (a socio-historical event or action) "to dependencies within its domain, to dependencies that have established the object" (*ND* 164). That approach conceals "the dependence on society" (*ND* 164); i.e. the various forces or purposes at work in society that determine our actions, and which our actions perpetuate. The "supraordinate concept" (*ND* 164) (the ideal-type) must be invoked to understand how or why the event or historical object happened, and for understanding the event/object in its full significance (how it was experienced, and the surreptitious elements of it that contribute to its effects). Weber discusses how a social scientific approach to history should be concerned with "practical *significance*" not just a "legal history" (a formal history of cultural phenomena, with reference to institutionalised norms) (1949:94).

This distinction between the supraordinate concept/ideal-type and the immediate cause maps onto Adorno's usage elsewhere of the terms 'underlying cause' (*Anlaß)* and 'proximate cause' (*Ursache*):

*Underlying cause***:** "the objective process"**,** "the element that is crystallized in the global social process that tends to take over everything else" (*HF* 36): the prevailing tendencies.

Proximate cause: the "specific condition that triggers" (ibid.) the objective process, which we tend to identify as the immediate facts that made the event possible. We need to see the underlying cause at work in the proximate cause, and to see the proximate cause realising the underlying cause. This allows us to better understand the effect, the event, in its 'practical significance'.

In a reference to Hegel[74], Adorno claims that "the concept is sufficient reason for the thing"; that is, "the totality" determines the social object, the event we want to understand (*ND* 164). Adorno claims that this can only be revealed through the individual, by which I understand we can only see the whole through the parts; we must see *how* different elements of society come together in individual experience to perpetuate capitalism, even if one individual experience considered in isolation does not reveal the whole (*ND* 164-5).

Adorno brings this up elsewhere, in his exegesis and critique of Kant's understanding of causality (Adorno, 1959)[75]. Adorno claims that we need an understanding of necessity that is not equated with laws of causality:

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[74] Adorno quotes *Science of Logic* (1817, II), where Hegel claims Leibniz was right that sufficient reason can be found in final causes: mechanical causes "do not suffice" because the thing must be explained in the relationship of the whole, in the concept.
[75] Adorno's reading is that in Kant, necessity is defined by causality and *vice versa* (Adorno, 1959:139); an event is an objective happening if one impression follows another by rule (1959:141). Necessity is then a representation of "a regularity, namely a lawful progression in the nature of consciousness that brings together successive phenomena, that is to say, a form of synthesis" (ibid.). As Kant emphasises, the existence of the object itself is not cognised as necessary; "it is not the existence of things (substances) but of their state of which alone we can cognize the necessity" (*CPR* A226-8). This supports Adorno's paraphrasing of Kant that objective knowledge is external to the object and "the concept of objectivity is chained to the predominant power of subjectivity" (Adorno, 1959:141). The necessity of an effect following from a cause is a form *we* give to objects (Kant *CPR* A91/B123-4). Whether there is a transcendental, socio-naturalistic necessity for the form of causal relations we give to objects, and whether objects do actually have that form is not what is at stake right now. However, it was indicated in Chapter III that Adorno believes we cannot give definitive answers to these questions.

> [I]f we regard something as necessary we doubtless *also* have causality in mind, but when we reflect on it we really always think of something *more*. Thus when we say that crises are a necessary part of the capitalist system, we do not really mean to say that a specific causal sequence at particular points necessarily leads to the symptoms of crisis. What we mean is that the system as such, with its mutually conditioned growth of wealth and poverty, necessarily contains the idea of recurrent crises *in its actual concept*. (1959:139)

Constructing an ideal-type that captures the irrational elements of capitalism, can show that 'crisis' is a concept that must be understood as intrinsic to capitalism[76]. For Adorno, defining capitalism as a free-market economic system disguises its connection with social ills. It is not enough to say that the symptoms of crisis were caused by (would not have happened without) actions *x*, *y* and *z*, and that these actions follow the rules of capitalist economy. Rather, we must acknowledge that those 'economic crises' are symptoms of deeper crises intrinsic to capitalism (social antagonisms, oppression and suffering) that are happening all along, and without which capitalism would not exist. The exclusion of the irrational, by ordering society rationally to fit the interests of dominant classes is self-undermining, because it creates more opposing interests that cannot be completely controlled or exterminated. In other words, the capitalist system foresees crises for

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[76] In his talk 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?', Adorno discusses how the profit-motive and power-motive are tied up with technological development: "invention of means of destruction has become the prototype of the new quality of technics" (1968:6). There is an illusion that technology brings flexibility and freedom. The ideal-type/constellation of capitalism can show how "[t]hat which is alien to the system reveals itself to be the inner essence of the system" (Adorno, 1968:9).

the ruling classes[77], through subjecting workers to the constant experience of crisis.

To see how this method of analysis applies to other historical contexts, we can observe it at work in Adorno's discussion of the French Revolution. He claims the trigger, the "so-called proximate cause", was Louis XVI's "bankrupt financial policy" (*HF* 36), i.e. his mismanagement. This can be understood as part of, and perpetuating, the ideal-type of expenditure-based economy (rather than capitalist acquisitiveness-based), of which mismanagement is an intrinsic part, Adorno claims. Since the middle class, not the ruling class, managed the economy with "balance sheets", the rationalisation of production (so, the development of the forces of production) was "in the hands of the middle class", while the ruling class's "mode of management was irrational" (*HF* 37).

When it comes to understanding the ideal-type as the reason for individual actions, Weber writes that the conduct of those who participate in the capitalist division of labour, this "masterless slavery", is "prescribed in all relevant respects by objective situations", so is ethically questionable "only as an institution" not in terms of an individual's behaviour, since the "penalty for non-compliance is extinction" (Weber, 1922: 'The Impact of Hierarchy on Economic Development'). There are two points there, which we have examined in the previous chapter in relation to Hegel:

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[77] We can assume Adorno is following Marx and Engels here: overproduction leads to less profit, threatening the bourgeois who are becoming increasingly redundant, but they are able to recover from this crisis "by enforced destruction of a mass of productive forces; on the other, by the conquest of new markets, and by the more thorough exploitation of the old ones. That is to say, by paving the way for more extensive and more destructive crises, and by diminishing the means whereby crises are prevented" (Engels and Marx, 1848:6).

1. An individual is conditioned to behave in certain ways, which are not captured by only looking at their individual psychology and attitudes.

2. The idea of collective action: Individuals produce effects beyond what the individual intended. The product of social interactions can be nonidentical to any actor's intention.

Weber also sees systemic actions having a function beyond what the individual intended, and that this implies some logic to the structure of society that determines individuals' behaviour, unbeknownst to them (see Weber 1905 and Gerth & Wright Mills, 1946:180 and 1920). However, for Weber (unlike for Marx, Lukács and Hegel), this is not a guarantee of objective meaning or universal interest being at work (Weber, 1922), and does not commit one to an affirmative view of history as rational. Since that is the position we have seen Adorno holds [78], what else can we take from Weber that helps support Adorno?

c. Ideal-types and a negative dialectical history

For Weber, ideal-types like 'Protestantism' and 'capitalism' allow him to make certain claims about their connection; take Weber's famous image of the Puritan, whose intention was to worship God, but contributed to bringing about capitalism. He thinks capitalism cannot

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[78] These points help us understand examples that Adorno races through in his lectures, of applying this underlying/proximate cause distinction to historical events. He claims the American-British bombing of German cities during the 2nd World War led to "slum clearance, the Americanization' of the city or other sanitation measures" although that was not the intention of the bombing" (*HF* 36). If we frame the immediate facts within the larger trends, we can regard the bombing of medieval town centres and their consequent Americanized rebuilding as part of the permeation of "the structural forms of the administered world" (ibid.). Presumably he means that the ideal-type was at work in the war, because instrumental rationality is about control, domination and functionality, removing any obstacles to one's ends. Rather than this being a sign that the good, or progress, is being realised through inevitable antagonisms, losses of life and suffering, this makes something innocuous, like the rebuilding and sanitisation of cities, symbolic of the domination inherent in it.

be thought of without Protestantism (defined with an ideal-type/constellation) making societies ripe for it (Weber, 1905). Although Adorno does not discuss it here, we can see him and Horkheimer (1944) doing something similar: seeing connections in different eras by using the ideal-types 'myth' and 'enlightenment' to show each is latent or implicit in the other. Like Weber, Adorno does not want to say that this means there is some ultimate necessity, rationality or *Spirit* at work ensuring that these came to be.

We can also see Adorno's notion of identity-thinking as an ideal-type. In the same vein as Weber describes Christianity, identity-thinking exists

> empirically [...] in the minds of an indefinite and constantly changing mass of individuals and assumes in their minds the most multifarious nuances of form and content, clarity and meaning. (Weber, 1949:96)

By synthesising different concrete phenomena, feelings and ideas under the same belief system, we can see their connections, in the context of a profoundly felt force at play, which is not expressed by any single element alone.

There are several points Weber makes that echo what we have seen in Adorno's critique of Hegel:

1. Weber warns against reducing history to these ideal-typical constructs as if they were the essential substance of history; they should not be read as "the "true" content and the essence of historical reality" that "operates behind the passage of events and which works itself out in history" (Weber, 1949:94). There is always potential for things to be different.

2. Weber emphasises the role of individual interests and contingencies in the inception and maintenance of the objects we are representing with ideal-types[79].

3. The historically determinable ideas, the practical or theoretical thoughts that can be said to explicitly or concretely govern people's conduct (Weber, 1949:95) can ensure that other ideas and beliefs are socially adopted. The logical persuasive force of ideas is not necessarily what keeps the latter alive: "empirical-historical events occurring in men's minds must be understood as primarily *psychologically* and not logically conditioned" (Weber, 1949:96).

4. Ideal-types can express a normative attitude, and ideal, by which a society can be characterised, which may never have been explicit in any consciousness: e.g. individualism, or sexism.

Thus, as well as the notion of ideal-types, we might conclude that Weber offers Adorno a means of bringing together various ways of understanding the history or genealogy of beliefs, values and ideas: for example, Nietzsche's notion that ideas might express psychological reactions, and, as Marx shows, they might survive because they serve material interests. Weber argues that if ideas promote the same conduct that certain interests do, this will make them survive.

Adorno finds in Weber an approach to history that is neither one-sidedly idealist nor materialist. Moreover, Weber wanted no overarching metaphysical claims about whether the individual or social are the fundamental categories of history. Adorno is advocating this,

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[79] Returning to the French revolution example, Adorno claims Louis XVI's mismanagement represents the "element of immediacy without which there could be no mediation" (*HF* 36). He emphasises we have to understand the "overall process" and "specific situation" as mediating one another (*HF* 37). Individual choices and actions are required to perpetuate the universal, and though one may end up triggering the disruption of the existing system, this does not make it more meaningful than others. This is a counter-idea to Hegel's notion of world-historical individuals (Hegel, 1840:49-50).

with a more critical endeavour; looking at the absence of critical rationality, and placing suffering as the priority in investigating history.

6. Constellations for Moral Concepts / Ideals

There are three general ways constellations work for moral concepts or ideals:

1. Adorno takes normative concepts such as morality, reason, justice, or freedom, to find that their conceptual content is tied up with their opposite (irrationality, injustice, unfreedom). We can understand Adorno as creating constellations to do this; he draws together concepts that point to empirical phenomena and other normative ideas, which highlight the ideological function of those concepts in society, through their connections with others that they sustain (for example *ND* 146; *MM* 36).

2. As well as the above subversive use of constellations, Adorno also treats concepts such as injustice, evil and domination in this collage-like way. He does this to represent real phenomena, to alter the meaning of such concepts, to express instances of them where they previously went unrecognised (especially in *MM*).

3. Constellations can also alter the content of positive moral concepts/ideals. The concepts referred to in (1) can be given a different kind of constellation: one that aims to show what the good, freedom or reason *actually* are, or would be, even though these do not exist in any imaginable society. Finlayson (2002) compares constellations as a way of representing the ineffable good with Nicholas of Cusa's negative theology. Adorno appears

to do this in *ND* 146-7 & 150[80]: while constellations can and should be made of concepts for the purpose of (1), those concepts must be retained and put into other constellations to hint at how they would be realised.

Conclusion

I have argued it is imperative to distinguish what constellations do for different objects of cognition, to see their value. There is still one more object to look at: the individual human being. In the next chapter, I will explore how a constellation approach answers Adorno's call for prioritising the individual experience in history. I will also suggest how Adorno can be defended against a criticism that Hegel's theory of individuality contains what Adorno should be looking for.

In summary, for Adorno, a constellation will not be the truth of an object, because truth will not be achieved in the form of a subject-object relationship. Truth would be an all-encompassing socio-historical achievement and in several places Adorno directly connects the true with the good, which is not possible in the current world. Instead, in each case, constellations can promise an understanding of the object that tells us more about the limits of our concepts, and that the object, our experience of the objective world and therefore our reality, should be different.

In the case of physical objects, there was an implication that the object had an essence that we are still not capturing with our constellations. However, Adorno cautions the use of the word 'essence'. He writes, "Essence can no longer be hypostatized as the pure, spiritual

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[80] Further examples in *MM* 33, *DE* xiv.

being-in-itself. Rather, essence passes into that which lies concealed beneath the facade of immediacy" (*ND* 167). Following this, he claims that essence "can be recognized only by the contradiction between what things are and what they claim to be" (ibid.). 'Essence' is the placeholder for the fact that our specification does not capture what the objects actually are and the contradiction is felt. Constellations are not, then, attempts to create a metaphysics or a complete theory of perception. However they can, on the one hand, suspend the ego by thinking about the object as subject-independent, mind-independent, and on the other hand help understand how we have affected or constructed the reality we experience as objective, and how this disguises something else that *is* there (the object's mediation) and something else that should be there (a rational identity that is displaced).

In the case of historical objects or moral concepts, constellations help concepts penetrate into the subjective experience of domination that this shared illusory objectivity sustains (which ordinarily concepts cannot do; they do not allow expression of our suffering)[81]. It allows examination of the systemic causes of historical events, and reorients our goals for doing history. Adorno points to the need to rewrite Weber in a negative dialectical mode. We have seen how this contributes to understanding Adorno's philosophy of history, and strengthens his position as an improvement of Hegel.

Ultimately, constellations are vehicles to make some headway to allowing various different objects to express to us what our language

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[81] "[...] vis-à-vis the alleged facts this essence is also conceptual rather than immediate, but such conceptuality is no mere product of the cognitive subject, in which the subject ultimately finds itself confirmed. Instead, the conceptuality expresses the fact that, no matter how much blame may be attached to the subject's contribution, the conceived world is not its own but a world hostile to the subject" (*ND* 167).

cannot. For Adorno, there is an ethical demand, towards nature[82] and towards people, to undertake this approach, and to see the links between them.

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[82] See Cook, 2014a for more on this idea, where she reconstructs Adorno's environmentalism.

V. Individuals

This chapter's aims are twofold. Firstly, I ask how we could use a constellations approach for thinking about individuals[83], particularly with regards to lending a voice to suffering in history. Secondly, I show how Adorno can respond to a criticism that his view of individuals commits him, after all, to a Hegelian picture of reconciliation (as an absolute, unmediated whole).

1. The Particularity of the Sufferer and History

We have seen Adorno claim we must assert the particular against the universal in history, lend a voice to suffering, focus on what Hegel would consider brute fact, and on what "fell by the wayside" (*MM* §98; *HF* 41).

Adorno considers it a duty for society to direct its attention to thinking about the past, and that noone (academics and the general population alike) is exempt. Adorno argues that if we do not face the atrocities of the recent past directly and investigate their causes and meaning, this all too easily leads to explicit or implicit justification (1959b:99-100). While we might want to start with a clean slate ("[one] wants to break free of the past") we must realise we are still somehow perpetuating it: "the past that one would like to evade is still very much alive" (Adorno, 1959b:89). On the other hand, we might believe we need to recover something from the past 'before' things went so barbarically wrong. Adorno worries we will attempt to recover aspects that were

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[83] The passage on constellations in *ND* is prefaced by reference to individuality, but it does not directly discuss people, so I am reconstructing by drawing on what Adorno says elsewhere.

intrinsically connected to the event. In short, our entirely legitimate and necessary outrage often manifests itself in ways that inadvertently perpetuate the same kinds of frameworks of thinking that cause ongoing suffering (relational powerlessness and oppression, on which a system depends), and which led to mass violence in the first place (Adorno, 1959b:103; *HF* 45). Similarly, attempts to resolve historical social-group oppression tend to appeal to ideologies that are intertwined with it. Interpreting history means focusing on the "problem of the subjective experience of the negativity of history" (*HF* 62). However, this is certainly not at the expense of collective suffering. Adorno's argument is that the two must come together. Focusing on the roots of disasters, mass violence and cruelty involves examining what seems unimportant or unobjectionable (things that did not spark collective outrage).

We have seen how constellations as ideal-types are aids for the endeavour of identifying such repeating or ongoing patterns, and that this must come with focus on individual experiences. Is there more to uncover about what it means for Adorno to ensure we are prioritising the individual, centering on the particularity of their suffering, in socio-historical investigation?

Recall how constellations address the puzzle that a guiding rule in negative dialectics is to see relations and similarities between what appears different or unrelated, and conversely differences in what appears related or identical. Adorno wants us to steer between seeing people in their particularities, while also as functions of universals, and for us to be self-critical of our use of universals (concepts) in these considerations. The particularities of individuals (their non-identities to one another, their qualitative differences) can be construed as the unique narratives they have which are in tension, antagonistic with (not just different from) how they can communicate, express them, and

how they are treated. This could be what Adorno means when he says there is a contradiction between "the definition which an individual knows as his own" and "the definition forced upon him by society when he would make his living" (*ND* 152). Adorno's notion of constellations can encourage us to retrieve something we are striving for, when appreciating another's qualities, in our general interaction. We can create constellations of what others are like with clusters of ideas and concepts, by being receptive to their narratives and particularities. This can resist the assumptions we bring to people that are influenced by mass-culture conformity, celebrity-culture and tropes in Hollywood films (*MM* 135-156). It also involves bringing to light what else our categories might be tracking (see Chapter IV, Section 6) and the extent to which the existence of a classification is "functioning *wholly* as a means to a social goal" to use Haslanger's description of a type of social construction (1995:101), for example, 'womanly beauty' or 'masculine strength' are concepts with changing content that institute norms for behaviour. People do end up behaving according to these norms; they can be said to have these traits, and it may also track some biological or other feature. However, these have damaging effects.

Part of identifying the suffering and the victims of dominating norms in history (*HF* 46) involves probing for people's particularities; which means that which makes them non-identical to the conceptual content of the labels we give them, while still using the lens of social relations. We could compare the idea of intersectionality with how constellations would work as a lens of analysis of suffering in history. Following Crenshaw's (2003) influential definition of the term, intersectionality is an approach to social critique and analysis of oppression, which involves exploring how different forms of oppression can act on one person. Rather than seeing, for example, sexism, racism, classism, ableism or homophobia as independent or mutually exclusive, we must see how a disabled black woman, for example, experiences sexism in a

different way from an able-bodied white woman; these things come together in constellations that can express someone's experience, without reducing them to a sum of their social identities.

Recalling the idea in Chapter II that the "suffering, as a consciousness of pain" (*HF* 42) in which the subject experiences non-identity, is a reminder of the subject's dignity, this inability to express does not preclude trying to identify actual suppressed examples of resistance[84] or protest. Adorno is suggesting things like art and unarticulated civil unrest were suggestive of possibilities for change (Adorno, 1963:84; *ND* 152), in opposition to Hegel's regarding of certain witty formulations of language, and certain art-works, as "mere existing things" (Adorno, 1963:83-5; see Hegel *PS* §321). In these cases, we can consider these things themselves as constellations in the ways listed in Chapter IV Section 3 and Section 6 (point 3).

What conception of the individual have we reached? Adorno does not give us a metaphysics of individuality, and I will now summarise why he does not need to, for the claims I have attributed to him, and for his approach to history.

In Chapters II and III, we saw the limits Adorno argues we get to, with what we can say about the epistemic subject and society, or about universal and necessary elements of subjectivity and consciousness (*ND* 152). We were led to consider the subject to be, by its nature, in some way constituted by its relation to objects (it has to be considered an object, in its sensory interactions - *ND* 183) and by its social relations (by its being an object in society, by thinking about and, having normative relations, towards, the object), and that these interplay in various ways. The contingency, the possibility for things to

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[84] See Finlayson, 2002 and Freyenhagen 2013: 162-186 for analysis of an ethics of resistance in Adorno.

be different, that Adorno has reason to commit to (from Chapters III and IV) is supported by the subject-object non-identity and dialectic (Adorno, 1963:16). In the end, Adorno's approach to history distances him from his engagement with Hegel's universal-particular structure. For Adorno, Hegel's structure limits us to viewing antagonisms and complexities of the social world through the lens of pre-established harmony: "the concept of the spirit is to be understood organically; the partial moments are to grow into and be interpenetrated by one another by virtue of a whole that is already inherent in every one of them" (Adorno, 1963:27). Constellations offer a more flexible way of investigating how an individual's experience, actions and beliefs can be said to be products of social interaction and patterns, while providing a deeper view of how the course of history can be said to have power over the individual, without ascribing necessity to it, and without establishing an ontology of personhood.

2. Does Adorno need Hegel's Concrete Universal?

There is a line of criticism (I will focus on Charlotte Baumann's (2011)), that Adorno should be committed to Hegel's idea of the concrete universal (so a Hegelian idea of individuality and freedom) given what else he takes from Hegel. I will demonstrate that it is possible to respond to the criticism from what we have covered, and that doing so clarifies and reinforces the importance Adorno places on doing history. However, puzzles do remain for Adorno's position. I will first summarise Baumann's argument and then see how Adorno could respond.

As we saw in Chapter III, Adorno is influenced by Hegel's idea of the abstract universal as a false mode of knowledge and society, as that

which unites particulars while suppressing their differences. But, as Baumann states, Adorno rejects Hegel's conception of the concrete universal, which she construes, in Hegel's terms, as follows:

> When Hegel thus claims that the concrete universal contains differences and particulars, he refers to these two relations: the universal is nothing but the totality of the relations between particulars and at the same time what constitutes them as different. (2011:79)

Baumann suggests framing Adorno's criticism of Hegel's postulation of an absolute whole (a concrete universal) as a criticism that the concrete universal is actually an abstract universal. That is, Hegel's absolute whole is supposed to be self-determining, and therefore unmediated by any other entity. As a concept of world history, Adorno can call this abstract insofar as it neglects and suppresses the features of its particulars; the complexities of history and unresolved antagonisms. Moreover, as we examined in Chapter III, Adorno takes Hegel to show that a concept has no meaning without being mediated by another concept; it is internally related to another concept (Baumann, 2011:85).

Baumann thinks we should consider the utopia of reconciliation that Adorno hints at, to be his competing version of the concrete universal. She highlights that Adorno claims that reconciliation would be unity in difference; epistemically, objectively and socially (Baumann, 2011:80; see *ND* 150). Baumann argues that when we put the pieces together of what Adorno says about this unity, and compare it with some of Adorno's agreements with Hegel (in particular, that there is no pre-social individual), then Adorno's concrete universal actually ends up looking like (or must look like) Hegel's concrete universal. The charge is that somewhere along the line, Adorno's criticism of Hegel's absolute whole fails.

Baumann reads Adorno as establishing his concrete universal through two routes:

1. (a) Understanding "what the particular truly is" and (b) asking "in what universal condition it would cease to be repressed" (Baumann, 2011:88).
2. Enquiring into "what the universal or specific universals must truly mean and how their positive aim could be realized in and through particulars."(ibid.)

Thus, Baumann argues, we can plausibly consider Adorno to be committed to a concrete universal in which individuals

> [count] socially in ever more ways [...] Everyone should have several social roles, his or her particular labor should be provided with a differentiated description or a specific category and should be socially related to others on this basis. In this way society would be 'giving individuals what is theirs' (*ND* 200), would enable them to count socially as specific individual persons. This implies a non-capitalist society, in which a social organ consciously connects different producers. (2011:89)

For Adorno, identity would be the genuine recognition of non-identity; there would always remain a difference (see *ND* 55). This implies, Baumann rightly claims, a society in which people's differences are constantly recognised. The universal (categories, concepts and norms) will be constantly checked "against the individual's participation in it" (Baumann, 2011:90) and a person's social roles would "express ever more closely" their "specific, manifold characteristics" (Baumann, 2011:91, 89).

Baumann's charge against Adorno, as I understand it, is that if the following two premises hold for Adorno,

1. An individual's particularities are enabled, mediated, constituted by society;

2. A society of reconciliation would be one in which these mediations are non-antagonistic (they must themselves be unmediated; they would be self-determining);

then this implies (as it does for Hegel):

3. An organic, unmediated whole that enables all mediations to be unmediated. In other words, if society is doing all the mediations, but none of the mediations are themselves mediated, then society just must be this self-determining entity.

Both Hegel and Adorno, Baumann argues, need to be committed to an unmediated whole, even if it can be argued that positing it betrays dialectics (Baumann, 2011:90). If Adorno denies (1), then we arrive at the picture of the individual as a pre-social atom. As Paul Giladi puts it in a similar critique: if Adorno commits to individuals always being different from their social role, then we are left with a "Hobbesian model of the individual as atomistic, totally egoistic and asocial" (2015:16), a type of model that Adorno considers a bourgeois ideology (see e.g. *ND* 36).

We can offer responses on Adorno's behalf, from what has been developed in this chapter and the previous, as follows.

First, we have summarised in Section 2 above that Adorno does not have to be committed to a metaphysics of the constitution of the subject. Furthermore, the kinds of relations and patterns that constellations identify in historical investigation are not the right kind of universals for a concrete universal in Hegel's sense.

Nonetheless, in *ND* 147, Adorno is indeed claiming: (i) rational identity (a reconciliation of non-identity, socially and epistemically) would be the ideal; (ii) that this comes close to Hegel's ideal, (iii) but there are differences between his and Hegel's views:

> If no man had part of his labor withheld from him any more, rational identity would be a fact, and society would have transcended the identifying mode of thinking. This comes close enough to Hegel. The dividing line from him is scarcely drawn by individual distinctions. It is drawn by our intent: whether in our consciousness, theoretically and in the resulting practice, we maintain that identity is the ultimate, that it is absolute, that we want to reinforce it - or whether we feel that identity is the universal coercive mechanism which we, too, finally need[,] to free ourselves from universal coercion, just as freedom can come to be real only through coercive civilization, not by way of any "Back to nature". (*ND* 147)

The implication is that individuals would be free and equal because of their participation in a complex of mediations as described above. Labour would not be withheld: from what we have seen in Chapters II-IV, we can deduce that this refers to our experience with objects in general; we could say that currently our interaction with objects is withheld from us, since the products of those interactions (thoughts, communication, even physical reactions[85]) disrupt a subject-object

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[85] Adorno's idea of mimesis, sometimes described as impulse or physical reaction, points to a potential to physically adjust to objects and people in ways that are open and not mediated by conceptual-thought, but also alludes to the fact that our embodied being is controlled by our instrumental rationality (*HF* 213, 259). This suggests norms are instituted and represented in space comparably to Merleau-Ponty's idea of our body as a "medium for having the world" with its role in creating significances and meanings through the cultivation of habits (Merleau-Ponty, 2002:169). How mimesis comes into Adorno's picture of rationality and the subject-object relationship would require much greater attention than here. Hammer interprets the notion as follows: "In mimetic behaviour (objectified and explored in art) experiential intake is based on the assimilation of the self to the other - a bodily

relation that ought to be, and we are alienated from what the object is (because our thought blocks it).

Adorno's thesis about the non-identical, the object's participation in experience, provides reasons for not construing an unmediated whole as reconciliation. Baumann claims Adorno must be committed to a concrete universal in Hegel's form since for Adorno "the object seems to be nothing but what the subject continually discovers and formulates" (Baumann, 2011:91). Reading both Hegel and Adorno claiming that "the same entity that caused the split of subject and object is also what reunites them", that consciousness and thinking are "the means to fully grasp those objects" (Baumann, 2011:81), she suggests this implies reconciliation would be an idealist identity for Adorno.

However, we have seen from Chapters II-IV that Adorno rejects that the object is reducible to our formulations. It is true that the subject would have to be involved in making things right, but it is not the case that the subject alone determines what the object is. It may be true that for Adorno, in genuine reconciliation, there would be no subject-object division as we are now forced to conceive of it, so it would not be the case that the object is different from what the subject discovers and formulates[86]. Adorno writes that "truly achieved identity" must not be understood in Hegel's sense of an

> identity of all as subsumed beneath a totality, a concept, an
> integrated society [but] more accurately perhaps, it would have

enactment whereby the object, via subjective experience, is contemplated in its otherness or mediated objectivity. Rather than a separate space of responsiveness, mimesis is to some extent integrated with, and serves as a condition for, the exercise of rational, conceptually structured capacities" (Hammer, 2015:165).

[86] See also Feenberg's claim that rational identity in Adorno would be an identity between understanding the object as a mediated whole, and it being a mediated whole (2014:ch. 6).

> to be the creation of a reconciled non-identity, much as we find
> in the utopia conceived by Hölderlin. (*HF* 55)

Could this reference to Hölderlin provide a further defense for Adorno? Hölderlin's conception is an infinite approximation, an embracing of tension and dissonance between our unity and difference from the world, which explicitly does not glorify wholeness and is not an organic whole[87]. We should understand Adorno as saying that any conception of a whole and unmediated mediations between people is inadequate so long as we do not understand what our relations to objects would be, and if we assume we would be unmediated by them (*HF* 52). Otherwise, we have betrayed the dynamism in experience that Adorno thinks Hegel revealed, and that we must retain, and from which we cannot escape, in thinking about the world.

Adorno claims the real difference in the conception must be seen between his and Hegel's "intent" (acknowledging he is bordering Hegel's ideal). Hegel's intent is that identity should be reinforced, recognised as implicit in the world. Adorno's is to face squarely the following antinomy: we need to consider identity as a coercion from which we need to be freed, while simultaneously as something that would allow our freedom (identifying with people and with things *ND* 150); the term 'identity' contains a promise (*ND* 149). We must outright reject *absolute* identity, and use the ideal of identity to be critical about where identity is lacking and understand that our thought works against us achieving identity, rather than enabling it.

Ultimately, for Adorno, there is illocutionary force in rejecting the notion of the whole for an ideal society; from his perspective, to say the concrete universal is possible would be equivalent to granting victory to

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[87] Larmore's presentation of Hölderlin's theory of unity seems to echo some of Adorno's ideas (Larmore, 2000:145).

imperialism[88]. Adorno rejects that there is a rational, necessary and logical passage from universal to particular to concrete universal/individuality, so he will reject what the concrete universal means for Hegel. This certainly does not resolve the question of whether we need Adorno to say more about his utopia, how else we can think about the unity if not as an organic, self-determining complex, but this creates the required distance from Hegel that does not commit Adorno to a full metaphysics or ontology of individuality. Adorno considers himself to be searching for the best solution to the philosophical problems at hand; while that involves critically working through Hegel, it involves rejecting all connotations that would affirm history as the realisation of reason and freedom.

Conclusion

I have suggested some ways in which constellations can apply to thinking about individuals, and shown that Adorno does not need to be committed to a notion of an unmediated whole in order to critically investigate history through the lens of antagonisms between social norms and individuals. Adorno gives investigating history a different standpoint, presupposition and goal from Hegel. For Adorno, we must hold that things genuinely could have been different, and normatively should have been. Adorno demonstrates the possibility to criticise and understand the roots of oppression, injustice and suffering, through historical examination, without requiring complete positive ideals[89].

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[88] "Only when the likes of Wagner had inherited idealism did it reveal itself to be the particularity that Hegel had recognized, at least in Fichte. In a total society, totality becomes radical evil. What resonates in Hegel along with the need for a progressive integration is the need for a reconciliation - a reconciliation the totality has prevented ever since it achieved the reality Hegel enthusiastically anticipated for it in the concept" (Adorno, 1963:62).

[89] See Allen, 2016, for how Adorno's thought can be used to deconstruct Western-centric narratives of progress.

Much of what has been argued here is that Adorno has strategic reasons to not commit to Hegel's ideal, as well as reasons which depend heavily on accepting his non-identity thesis. It may not ultimately be satisfactory that Adorno does not offer measures for freedom and the good. This is a part of a general problem of the negativity of Adorno's philosophy, but I hope we have seen that without such measures, Adorno demonstrates the importance for philosophy to take the critical approaches to history that he suggests, focusing on individuals and suffering (Adorno, 1963:63). This does imply that ultimately Adorno does not need Hegel's notions of *Geist* and the universal for his interpretation of history, and that what he means by the universal-particular dialectic, despite claiming that it is Hegelian, is not. Rather, engaging with it serves as a bridge for Adorno to rethink the antagonisms within power relations, within each moment of concept-use, and between a society that takes on a life of its own and the individuals who construct it.

VI. Conclusion

Adorno suggests we take a lesson that he learns from Hegel: to prioritise intelligibility over rigid clarity, so the reader, rather than pre-empting the meaning, watches it "unfold" (1963:107). My aim to think and write clearly about Adorno, while watching his own ideas unfold in surprising and provoking ways, has certainly not been without difficulty. There are many ways in which investigating Adorno's ideas about history could be, and have been, undertaken[90], and there are passages throughout his entire *oeuvre* that touch on the topics covered, which I have been unable to include.

I aimed, through this thesis, to show how ideas about history come into Adorno's critique of identity-thinking, in order to examine how constellations offer a route for philosophy to proceed given our epistemic limits and the need to undertake historical investigation. Because of Adorno's fixation with Hegel on these topics, I sought to investigate how Hegel helps Adorno reach his positions.

In Chapter I, I showed that Adorno's critiques of methods of historical interpretation presuppose several things: a problem with conceptual thought; a concern to focus on roots of oppression; an understanding of individual consciousness and society being, in some way, mutually conditioning; a rejection of ascribing necessity or universal interest to the course of history; a rejection of ascribing no meaning to history and interpreting history as a series of facts; and an imperative for philosophy to engage in historical investigation. To motivate these criticisms and reconstruct his own approach, I suggested we needed to

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[90] See Allen 2014 and 2016; Bowie 2013; Cook 2014a.

carefully work through what Adorno's critique of conceptual thinking was and in what ways Hegel helps connect it to socio-historical factors.

In Chapter II, I introduced Adorno's thesis about the non-identity between our concept and objects. This showed that, for Adorno, there is an inherent limitation to identity-thinking (concept-use) and a need for expression that is negatively felt. I described how there is, for Adorno, a historicised problem with identity-thinking, in its manifestation as instrumental rationality encompassing all spheres of contemporary Western society. Yet, we saw that this problem is not isolated to one era, and has played out dialectically (rather than in a linear or declinist fashion) throughout history. I raised questions about whether and how our basic epistemic limits in identity-thinking, for Adorno, are socio-historically conditioned.

In Chapter III, I examined how Adorno's critique of identity-thinking is influenced by, and supported by, his engagement with Hegel. I aimed to set out what Adorno takes from Hegel, with regards to the object's involvement in concept-use, and the role language plays in concept-formation. This led to a discussion of how contingency and power relations come into the development of thought, to make plausible the idea that concepts are involved in domination of objects and of people. I attempted to establish what Adorno's critical discussion of Hegel's treatment of contingency in history amounts to, concluding that Adorno does not intend to reduce normativity (instrumental rationality) to contingency, nor to ascribe necessity to the course of history characterised by identity-thinking. I turned to why Adorno does not think we can hope to reach theories of the origins of thought and of conflict, yet, puzzlingly, we must see domination of objects and domination of subjects as mutually constitutive. I then suggested why these ideas make sense of Adorno's claim to learn something from Hegel that was lost in Marx, about the relationship

between the subject, society, and the course of history. I concluded that Adorno takes from Hegel a serious concern about the limits of language, its relationship to conceptual thought, and the need for philosophy to prioritise expressing particulars (objects of thought and individuals in society and history).

In Chapter IV I investigated how we could understand Adorno's idea of thought-models and constellations. I aimed to show how constellations are valuable and defensible vehicles of thought to make some headway to allowing various objects to express what our language cannot. I examined how this contributes to understanding Adorno's philosophy of history and ideas on method in history, by examining how his position aligns with Weber's ideal-types.

In Chapter V, I inquired into how we might think about individuality through the lens of constellations and how this links to Adorno's call for expressing suffering in history. I addressed Baumann's poignant criticism that Adorno's position on individuality (if akin to Hegel's in the ways Adorno seems to suggest) implies a notion of an unmediated whole, as a reconciliation of history's antagonisms. I suggested Adorno's response has to be that Adorno's position on universals and individuals is not Hegel's, and that his own position can be defended. This did not answer the question of Adorno's conception of the good[91], if he has one at all; it only addressed the motivations for opposing Hegel's idea.

Overall, I hope to have met the aims in the following ways: Hegel aids Adorno in the diagnosis of the limits to our conceptual thinking and its relation to socio-historical factors. This explained why conceptual thinking is false and involves domination: universals dominate objects and individuals, in socio-historical space. This showed why Adorno

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[91] See Bernstein, 2001 and Freyenhagen 2013 on Adorno's ethics.

demands that philosophy proceeds with awareness of its historicity (its mediation at all moments with objects) and its need to undertake historical investigation. Adorno's use of Hegel helps affirm the need for a philosophy focused on "working through the past" (Adorno, 1959b). I argued that Adorno's notion of constellations is a coherent offering for prioritising the object in thought and the particular (individual) in socio-historical investigation. Finally, the suggestion is that while Adorno thought engagement with Hegel provided the most promising route to take, given his agenda (to critique social reality and positivist philosophy, and to redo Marx), his reconception of Hegelian ideas do not commit him to affirming Hegel's metaphysics and ontology.

Having sought an argumentative line through these ideas, I do not purport to have reached a stage at which I can categorically affirm or reject Adorno's positions; rather, I have principally tried to make sense of why Adorno takes prioritising the object in epistemology and prioritising the subject in history to be interconnected notions and to reconstruct some of his ideas about how this would work. Questions remain about what it means to identify instances of critical thought and resistance when history is characterised by identity-thinking, and I have not analysed how Adorno's aesthetic theories could give an indication of where expression and truth can be found. However, I hope this indicates how the conclusions of this thesis can contribute to ongoing discussions of those issues.

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Abbreviations

DE   *Dialectic of Enlightenment*

ND   *Negative Dialectics*

HF   *History and Freedom: Lectures*

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