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**THE PSYCHOANALYTIC DIMENSION OF
ADORNO'S CRITICAL THEORY**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of The
Nottingham Trent University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

To Helen, for Proust.

Thanks also to my supervisors, John Tomlinson and Conrad Lodziak, and to all the people who read drafts and commented on them, especially Elizabeth Boa, David Kidner and Richard King. Finally, I would like to thank Henry Rose, for telling me nearly twenty years ago that it was good, not bad, to be "young and idealistic."

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ABSTRACT

Adorno's theory of the philosophical constellation, in which no approach is privileged, demands that more attention be given to his use of psychoanalysis. The best understood dimension of Adorno's use of Freudian theory is his critique of authoritarian irrationalism, especially anti-Semitism, but the themes at work in that critique play a deeper role in his philosophy and literary criticism. A subtle concern with childhood experiences of pleasure and disappointment emerges as crucial in Adorno's critical theory, and I elucidate this concern by reference to Adorno's reading of Proust. I apply this psychoanalytic framework to a detailed examination of Adorno's Freudo-Marxist reading of Kafka. This literary model allows a further clarification of the role of psychoanalysis in Adorno's theory, because it connects with the theme of Adorno's Jewish identity. The messianic moment of Adorno's work shows the unique contribution psychoanalysis makes to his concept of utopia. Adorno's theory of mimesis can also be understood in new ways by focusing on its psychoanalytic dimension. Freudian theories of comic and regressive mimesis operate in complex ways in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Aesthetic Theory*. I supplement my reading of Adorno's psychoanalysis with reference to the work of Nietzsche, because this helps to clarify Adorno's constellational approach to dialectical theory. Adorno's reading of Freud is strongly influenced by Nietzschean genealogy, as I demonstrate with regard to Adorno's critique of authoritarian resentment.

INTRODUCTION.

I here sketch in broad outline the portrait of Adorno I wish to substantiate in this thesis, ending with a brief account of my general aims and methods.

For those seeking to develop the Frankfurt tradition, engaging with Adorno is an essential hurdle. The usual strategy is to demonstrate how Adorno remains caught in a theoretical dead-end. His 'negative psychology'¹ proclaims the death of psychological individuality at the hands of an all-inclusive and monstrous social totality, in a bleak reversal of Hegel's idealist celebration of the newly born modern subject. Guided by Marx's exposure of the social contradictions producing that subject, as well as by Freudian and Nietzschean theories on repression and internalisation, Adorno conceptualises the seemingly inescapable domination of inner and outer nature which determines both individuals and society. This ubiquitous domination expunges the potential for a collective politics of resistance. Now, only the fragmented mimetic recollections of authentic art can stand as critique.

Adorno is therefore chastised for theoretically neglecting the particular characteristics of the social - allegedly, Adorno always conceives it as a purely negative force. The influence of Nietzsche's condemnation of the herd is identified as one source of a pernicious cultural mandarinism in Adorno, whose stance relies on an undialectical discourse of decline. Escaping Adorno's dead-end requires a less totalising view of the social realm, in order to allow a less pessimistic and less monadic analysis of individuality.

¹G. Rose (1978), *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of T.W. Adorno*, London: Macmillan, p.106.

The critique of Adorno just caricatured is put forward by Jürgen Habermas.¹ Habermas provides a more nuanced sociology than Adorno, one emphasising shifting communicational negotiations, apparently demonstrating Adorno's trope of the 'total society' to be a fiction obscuring the potential for a socially based emancipatory interest.

This powerful critique of the social *lacunae* of Adorno's thought, which uses revisionist psychoanalysis and communications theory to soften the monadic subjectivism of Adorno's Freudian-Nietzschean paradigm, obscures the unique features of Adorno's attempt to situate individuality using psychoanalytic theory. This sort of reading of Adorno has become the dominant one, especially among social theorists. The mistake is to assume that the success or failure of Adorno's theoretical enterprise should be judged according to the criteria of sociology alone, or according to the criteria of a socio-economically grounded aesthetic theory. Adorno had a much wider range of interests. Music, together with the study of philosophy, was combined with a childhood flirtation with religion. This fascination was replaced, perhaps somewhat reactively, by a strictly enlightened early statement of his philosophical position. His (rejected) *Habilitation* thesis of 1927 was

an extended study on *The Concept of the Unconscious in the Transcendental Theory of Mind*. [...] Although he wrote his thesis without any great pleasure, and forced everything into the procrustean bed of Cornelius's [Adorno's examiner] epistemology, Adorno nevertheless clearly showed what it was that motivated him; an enthusiasm for the 'primacy of consciousness'.²

¹J. Habermas (1987), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, trans. F. Lawrence, Cambridge: Polity. My account of Habermas draws from A. Honneth (1991), *The Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, Cambridge MA.: MIT Press.

²R. Wiggershaus (1994), *The Frankfurt School*, trans. Michael Robertson, Cambridge: Polity Press, p.81-82. Rose also briefly discusses Adorno's *Habilitation*, noting that the 'interest in psychoanalysis predated Adorno's involvement with Marxism.' *The Melancholy Science*, p.91.

If Cornelius's philosophy was a procrustean bed, then the long established speculative concept of the unconscious and its concrete scientific development by Freud must have been the element of the thesis in which Adorno really had an interest. Adorno included this rather undialectical appreciation of psychoanalysis:

We regard the significance of psychoanalysis so highly because it serves the investigation of the unconscious without burdening it with any inappropriate metaphysical pathos, and because its investigations are directed at the elimination of unconscious states and thus offer a decisive weapon against every sort of metaphysics of the instincts and deification of mere dull, organic life.¹

Wiggershaus explains how, at the end of the thesis, Adorno's later direction is prefigured by a Marxist addition to his Freudian critique of the romantic pre-Freudian notion of the unconscious:

He observed that the theories of the unconscious which he had criticised served as ideologies which partly transfigured the governing economic order and partly distracted attention from it. [...] in brief, without actually naming it as such, he declared his belief in the Marxist theory that consciousness was determined by social existence.²

So, traversing the history of German philosophy, Adorno moves from an idealistic study of the psyche to materialist social theory. The extent of the movement can be deduced from Adorno's reversal of his early interest in the primacy of consciousness. In his late works, Adorno concentrates on showing the primacy of the object.³ As he changes his

¹Adorno, in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.82.

²Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.82.

³T.W. Adorno (1990), *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton, London: Routledge, p.183.

orientation, Adorno's view of psychoanalysis becomes more dialectical. In the 1927 thesis, he duplicates Freud's stress on controlling the unconscious through reason and enlightened science. In contrast, Adorno's shift to materialist social theory produces a sharp critique of the concept of rationality in Freud, and in the philosophy of mind generally. I aim to show that the critique of progress which follows in the wake of Adorno's materialism paradoxically involves a positive shift in Adorno's attitude towards metaphysics and nature. This is in some ways a dialectical revisiting of his early religious phase. In other words, having traversed philosophical history in one direction, Adorno also moves against the stream. Adorno's mature theory speaks for the irrational unconscious, not just against it, showing its scars to be a product of the social constraint of consciousness. The repressed voice of instinct becomes for Adorno a twisted shout of protest, a form of negative knowledge. The disparagingly described 'dull, organic life' of Adorno's thesis becomes something more exciting in his later work, partly due to the influence of Nietzsche's affirmative philosophy of life. Adorno's reabsorption of the messianic idea of a life that really lives influences his radicalisation of the concept of rationality to include much that traditional reason is content to discard, without abandoning the enlightened critique of myth.¹

As these changes in direction are a deliberate antithesis to Adorno's (*Habilitation*) thesis, not a simple refutation of it, they should not be mistaken as a rejection of psychological theory. Adorno deliberately maintains the tension between psychoanalytic subjectivism and sociological objectivism, never resolving the two into a unified theory. For Adorno, the clash between these mutually critical levels of analysis is itself of immense theoretical importance.

¹Adorno learnt this from Walter Benjamin. See J. Roberts (1992), *Walter Benjamin*, London: Macmillan.

In his mature work, Adorno carries out critical reflection by using this tension to expose the moments of contingency and contradiction which deny social dominance the status of necessity. Adorno may build up the total society as a looming and seemingly immovable monolith, but his presentation also seeks to show up the cracks beneath the impressive facade. Some of the most glaring cracks rent the psychology of those living in the shadow of the monolith. If the social predominates, critically analysing psychology becomes all the more important, because repressed impulses, or the neurotic traits betraying their presence, become visible markers of the domination emancipatory theory wants to uncover.

Accordingly, following Hegel and Freud, Adorno shows how studying the contradictions of consciousness may reveal certain historical developments more precisely than an investigation which confines itself to social or economic levels of analysis. Habermas might be correct to argue on theoretical grounds that the social totality is more fragile, more consensual, and more riven by struggle than it seems. But it is this claim which abstracts from the experience of today's democratic consumers, rather than Adorno's evocation of a subject besieged. Adorno uses the probing psychoanalytic dimension of his writings to explore the idea of the "bad" totality from the perspective of actual experience, which turns out to be an experience under threat. Adorno tries to call up moments of resistance through the reflectively induced embarrassment which follows in the wake of hearing the worst about one's limits, provoking a transgression of them.

The threat of modern life triggers various psychological defence mechanisms, in which repressions outnumber sublimations. In the face of this threat, and the psychological states associated with it, reflection on the fate of experience assumes an importance equal to the analysis of the social world, especially as those states may in time congeal to form distinct, and

distinctly unpleasant, libidinal character types of world-historical importance - most famously, the authoritarian personality. Such psychological considerations form part of Adorno's sober critique of the Marxist faith that oppression will in the end foster critical consciousness, a critique which draws in part on Nietzsche's consideration of slave morality.

The various aspects of Adorno's use of psychoanalysis allow me to examine from a relatively fresh perspective his engagement with two thinkers whose concepts are vital to an understanding of Adorno's critical theory: Freud and Nietzsche. This pairing is obviously not a definitive constellation of Adorno's sources. Convincing claims could be made to the effect that any or all of Kant, Hegel, Marx, Husserl, Weber, Kraus, Kracauer and Benjamin are of equal or greater significance. I make limited reference to Benjamin and Marx, but almost entirely neglect the others. I pay particular attention to Freud, because some elements of his influence on Adorno have not been properly appreciated. I include a chapter on Nietzsche both because the proximity of certain Nietzschean concepts to the work of Freud is an important factor in the development of psychoanalysis itself, and because Adorno's approach to psychological and theoretical analysis draws heavily on Nietzsche's genealogies in their own right. Overall, I hope my attempt to produce a sustained reading of Adorno from a Freudian-Nietzschean perspective shows how each different star of Adorno's constellation casts a different light on his enigmatic theory, and that all these wavelengths must be combined to properly illuminate his legacy.¹

Methodologically, I focus on textual evaluation and critique, primarily seeking to establish my arguments on theoretical grounds immanently derived from Adorno's work and the work of Freud and

¹See M.Jay (1984), *Adorno*, London: Fontana, pp.15-23.

Nietzsche. To counter any resulting tendency towards abstraction, I use Adorno's interpretations of literature and art as case studies of his development of psychoanalytic theory. As a secondary method, I make some use of historical and biographical material to contextualise Adorno's ideas and generate some tentative speculations about Adorno's own mindset - but only when my primary textual explications demand it. As an even more tentative, but ultimately inescapable, third method, I follow the suggestion of Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jeremy Shapiro that some of Adorno's remarks on how to read Hegel amount to a guide to reading his own work:¹

No one can read any more out of Hegel than he puts in. The process of understanding is a progressive self-correction of such projections by comparison with the text. The content itself contains, as a law of its form, the expectation of productive imagination on the part of the one reading. Whatever experience the reader may register has to be thought out on the basis of the reader's own experience.²

I have found this to be especially true of Adorno's use of psychoanalysis, which demands personal self-reflection as the price of understanding. Accordingly, although I provide no explicit autobiography, it is best to admit at the outset that some of my emphasis comes from following the aspects of Adorno's psychoanalysis which speak to my own experience. I hope that any tendency towards over-projection has been corrected by comparison with Adorno's texts.

In summary, the "thesis of my thesis" is that certain aspects of Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis have been neglected. I aim to

¹See their introduction to T.W.Adorno (1993), *Hegel:Three Studies*, trans. S.W. Nicholsen, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, esp. pp.xxvii-xxix.

²T.W.Adorno (1963), 'Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel', in Adorno, *Hegel:Three Studies*, pp.89-148, p.139.

substantiate my claim for the importance of Freud in critical theory by promoting a clearer understanding of the "deep" elements of Adorno's psychoanalysis. I see this aim as working in the service of the interdisciplinary aims of the original Frankfurt School, against the competitive departmentalisation of theory in the social sciences and humanities.

CHAPTER BREAKDOWN.

Chapter One: Psychosocial, Literary and Philosophical Aspects of Adorno's Appropriation of Psychoanalysis.

Against certain sociologicistic receptions of Adorno's theory, I establish Adorno's *penchant* for Freud's rich conceptualisations. Adorno suggests Freudian psychoanalysis is the psychological theory most attuned to present conditions: both in certain positive aspects of its theory, and in the negative features of its distortions. Suspicious of the adjustment orientation of therapy, Adorno believes psychoanalysis to be of more use as a form of theoretical reflection than as a medical tool. Accordingly, this chapter moves from Adorno's well-known interrogation of authoritarian irrationalism, to an examination of his critique of conformist psychoanalysis, then onto an evaluation of Adorno's "Proustian" extension of Freud's revelatory (but desiccated) discovery of infantile sexuality. Childlike perception emerges as a latent critique of repressive society. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the deeper contribution of psychoanalysis to Adorno's philosophy, as a type of negative knowledge of utopian possibilities.

Chapter Two: Adorno's Quasi-Messianic Freudo-Marxist Reading of Kafka.

Having introduced the various levels of Adorno's Freudianism, I develop a detailed reading and contextualisation of the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's portrait of Kafka. Adorno, Freud and Kafka all work through the Jewish tradition, and all three connect the phylogenetic childhood of humanity with the experiences particular to each

individual's ontogenesis. Following Walter Benjamin, Adorno's interpretation of Kafka combines theology, psychology and social critique to produce an idiosyncratic Freudo-Marxist theory. Kafka is used as an artistic prototype of negative dialectics. Adorno takes Kafka's dark writing as a negative imprint of the truth, in which glimmers the trace of repressed possibility. Adorno's materialist consideration of Kafka's account of sexual relations absorbs a messianic charge through his psychoanalytic appropriation of the theological idea of a resurrection of the body. I complete this chapter with a critical examination of Adorno's messianic stance, relating it to certain contradictions which dog Adorno's theoretical self-analysis.

Chapter Three: Dialectics of Mimesis in Adorno and Freud.

In Adorno's philosophical aesthetics, mimesis plays a crucial role in his attempted conceptualisation of a non-conceptual relation with otherness. The unattainability of this ideal is another form of Adorno's negative knowledge. Adorno uses Freudian anthropology to trace the problematic development of the mimetic impulse from biological mimicry, through its spiritual expression in primitive ritual, to its suppression and subsequently distorted rebellions. Art provides one refuge for mimetic practice, but fascism supports a twisted mimesis of mimesis which gratifies the worst side of repressed nature. These aspects of mimesis are clarified using Freud's theory of comic mimicry, allowing me to reconnect with the notion of a critically childlike perspective introduced in my earlier discussions of Proust and Kafka.

Chapter Four: Nietzschean Influences on Adorno's Philosophical Appropriation of Psychoanalysis.

Nietzsche's account of the frightening childhood of human subjectivity influences the content and critical tone of Adorno's use of Freud. But Adorno refuses Nietzsche's invitation to affirm the whole of existence, accusing him of remaining mired in a biologism which repeats elements of the idealism it wants to overturn. Habermas's critique of Adorno is important in this chapter, because it focuses on Adorno's appropriation of Nietzsche. Habermas criticises this appropriation for duplicating Nietzsche's allegedly totalising critique of reason. But the price of abandoning the dialectics of nature in favour of communications theory is the reduction of Freud and Nietzsche's materialistic insights to the status of a sociologically hermeneutic discourse. I go on to explore Adorno's critique of the super-ego, concluding the chapter, and the thesis, by returning to the topic with which I started: Adorno's critique of authoritarian irrationalism. Revisiting this critique from a Nietzschean perspective re-emphasises the wide-ranging nature of Adorno's philosophy, hopefully reminding the reader that my magnification of the Freudian star of Adorno's theoretical constellation is an artifact of the telescopic focus needed to produce the clarity demanded of a doctoral thesis.

Conclusion.

I provide a short conclusion reviewing the main points of the thesis, as an aid to recapitulating and substantiating my overall picture of Adorno.

CHAPTER ONE:

PSYCHOSOCIAL, LITERARY AND PHILOSOPHICAL ASPECTS OF ADORNO'S APPROPRIATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS

Introduction.

In Section I, 'Keeping the Freud in Adorno's Freudo-Marxism', I review the relevant literature and suggest that some receptions of Adorno tend to suppress the deeper Freudian components of his work.

In Section II, 'Adorno's Psychoanalysis of Authoritarian Irrationalism', I provide a short account of Adorno's most widely understood use of classical psychoanalysis to provide theoretical insights into authoritarian phenomena in fascist Germany and liberal America. Adorno's wholesale adoption of psychoanalytic concepts to study the psychology of fascist propaganda shows that Freudian ideas remain indispensable in his critical theory.

In Section III, 'Rescuing Orthodoxy: Adorno's Immanent Critique of Freud', I present an exegesis which shows that Adorno's use of psychoanalysis tries to become an immanent critique of the conformist and authoritarian element of psychoanalysis. "Immanent," because it relies on the libertarian possibilities of Freud's own theory. This is confirmed by Adorno's measured defence of analytic orthodoxy against the revisionist tide, even though he (like the revisionists) slates Freud's repressive streak.

In Section IV, 'Adorno's Caricature of Freud's Repressive Tendency', I suggest that Adorno's picture of a repressive Freud, which is crucial to Adorno's critical appropriation of psychoanalysis, becomes a caricature which sometimes occludes his implicit respect for

psychoanalysis. Freud is more liberal than Adorno allows, and Adorno's own theory manifests elements of the authoritarian dimension that he identifies in Freud. Nevertheless, it does carry a certain critical force.

In Section V, 'Childhood and Utopia', I show that this critical force can be illustrated by Adorno's preference for Proust's subtle literary account of infantile yearnings, over Freud's scientific one. Adorno produces a Proustian account of certain childhood experiences, which brings out the clash between psychological drives and social forces enacted in family life. Proust's expressive power both endorses a Freudian interest in the uncanny echoes of infantile drives which decentre adult consciousness, and acts as a critique of Freud's reification of the childhood experiences he doggedly uncovered. By making explicit the psychoanalytic concern with sexual difference which characterises Adorno's conception of a utopian relation with otherness, I counter the common claim that *Negative Dialectics* offers no more than an aesthetic norm by which critique can proceed.

Finally, in Section VI, 'Psychoanalysis as Negative Knowledge', I conclude with an abstract account of the deeper methodological contribution psychoanalysis makes to the structure of Adorno's anti-systematic philosophy. Freud's clinical method provides one model of a constellational approach to the study of distortions in the formation of the subject. These concluding considerations prepare the ground for their further concretion in Chapter Two.

I: Keeping the Freud in Adorno's Freudo-Marxism.

Adorno's contribution to Frankfurt School theory includes an under-appreciated critical appropriation of Freud. Some contemporary commentators with an interest in Adorno seek to downplay the role of psychoanalysis in his theory,¹ or to suggest that his insights could be articulated using an alternative variety of psychology.² This critical move distorts these readings of Adorno, because although their authors are well aware of the role of psychoanalytic concepts in Adorno's famous studies of authoritarian irrationalism,³ they overlook the more subtle overall contribution of those concepts to Adorno's philosophy. This allows the persistence of the view that the unwieldy and allegedly suspect Freudian system is just a disposable addition to Adorno's critical social theory.

Fredric Jameson claims in his book on Adorno that the Frankfurt School make only a limited use of psychoanalysis 'as a kind of supplementary social psychology (repression and the damaged subject as indices and results of the exchange process and the dynamics of capitalism) but never as any centrally organising concept.'⁴ Jameson's parenthesis is accurate enough, and there is also a deeper truth hidden here: Adorno's philosophy is conceived as a critique of *any* reliance on a 'centrally organising concept.' But the sidelining of psychoanalysis is still a weak point of Jameson's exposition of Adorno. Brushing aside the non-Marxist

¹F. Jameson (1990), *Late Marxism: Adorno, or, the Persistence of the Dialectic*, London: Verso, p.26, p.254(n4).

²S. Crook (1994), 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', in T.W. Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture*, London and New York: Routledge, pp.1-33, p.21-22.

³T.W. Adorno *et al* (1982); *The Authoritarian Personality*, New York: W.W. Norton;

T.W. Adorno (1978), 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda', in Arato and Gebhardt (eds), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, New York: Urizen, pp.118-137;
Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth*.

⁴Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p.26.

elements of Adorno distorts the picture as much as leaving out his commitment to the Marxist tradition. Quoting from Jameson's exegesis of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Peter Osborne notes the problem:

It may indeed be 'unnecessary to suppose' that the presence of non-Marxist forms of explanation in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* 'mark a move beyond Marxism or a renunciation of the Frankfurt School's essentially Marxist programs of the 1930s' (p.108). But this leaves the matter at the level of supposition. It hardly constitutes a reason for foregoing investigation of the conceptual relations between its different elements (Marxian, Nietzschean, Weberian, and Freudian) when its status as a Marxist text is so disputed.¹

The logical correlate of Adorno's refusal of theoretical foundations is that the addition of merely supplementary concepts is anathema for him. Adorno does much more than simply transpose a few psychoanalytic concepts into the realm of social analysis.

One reason for such assumptions regarding Adorno's use of psychoanalysis might be that Adorno's explicit use of psychoanalytic concepts as direct tools of cultural criticism is often more obvious than his fertile philosophical appropriation of them, which is fragmentary and elusive. Adorno's habit of alluding to theories without providing explicit references does not help matters, leaving the reader free to project their own specialisms onto his texts. Marxists see only Marx, Derridians celebrate Adorno as a proto-deconstructionist - and of course Freudians may similarly project their concerns onto Adorno. Nevertheless, it is probably true to say that Adorno is read more often by philosophers,

¹P. Osborne (1992), 'A Marxism for the Postmodern? Jameson's Adorno', in *New German Critique*, no. 56, Spring-Summer 1992, pp.171-192, p.179-80.

sociologists, literary critics and political theorists than by psychoanalysts - and the secondary literature on Adorno reflects this bias.¹

Martin Jay and Russell Jacoby stand as notable early exceptions to the rule that Adorno critics neglect Freud. Jay's book, *The Dialectical Imagination*,² is still the one providing the best general introduction to the psychoanalytic dimension of critical theory. But since Jay covers the whole Frankfurt School and leaves off at 1950, important elements of Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis, which continued into the 1950s and 1960s, are not examined. In his later introduction to Adorno,³ brevity prevents Jay's indication of psychoanalysis's importance developing into an in-depth examination. Here, Jay chooses not to select psychoanalysis for detailed explication as one of the main stars of Adorno's constellation, though he recognises that it could have been so selected. I follow up this recognition, which Jay supports by identifying some of Adorno's most crucial references to psychoanalysis, providing important initial interpretations to which I owe much of the original impetus for this thesis.

Jacoby's *Social Amnesia*⁴ acutely diagnoses the tendency for post-Freudian psychoanalysis to forget some of what Freud learnt, but Adorno is only one figure among many examined in the book. I will be developing

¹One aim of this thesis is to make explicit some of Adorno's allusions to Freud, by providing various relevant references to the commonly available *Penguin Freud Library*. Most of the references and footnotes to Adorno's works in English have been added by translators, who have understandably been influenced by the dominant sociological reception of Adorno - introducing a secondary bias in the form of fewer added references to psychological texts than Adorno's work would justify. As a result, although many writers have recognised the importance of Freud in Adorno's work, not so many have gone on to provide the concrete analysis of Adorno's psychology this importance demands.

²M. Jay (1973), *The Dialectical Imagination*, London: Heinemann.

³Jay, *Adorno*.

⁴R. Jacoby (1975), *Social Amnesia: Conformist Psychology from Adler to Laing*, Sussex: Harvester.

the rapidly growing body of literature¹ which maintains Jacoby's insight, countering the similar amnesia which threatens the reception of Adorno's psychological work.

David Held provides a useful introductory chapter on the Frankfurt School's encounter with Freud, which clearly sets out the overall Freud-Marxist perspective and the notion of a decline of autonomy and familial authority, without getting into much detail on the specifics of Adorno's other uses of psychoanalysis.²

Rolf Wiggershaus's *The Frankfurt School* provides many useful details of the psychoanalytic elements of critical theory, but some of the more elusive elements of Adorno's work are lost because of the monumental scale of the book.³ Wiggershaus's heroic assembling of biographical and historical detail remains indispensable.

D. Baines' thesis, *The Influence of Freudian Psychology on the Critical Theory of T.W. Adorno. M. Horkheimer and H. Marcuse*,⁴ covers some of the ground traversed in mine. However, Baines takes rather a different viewpoint. Essentially, and despite his appreciation of Freud's importance, he argues that psychoanalysis acts as a contamination of the utopian potential of Frankfurt School Marxism. I instead maintain that the psychoanalytically derived notion of a world fit for the best of

¹J. Benjamin (1977), 'The End of Internalisation: Adorno's Social Psychology', in *Telos*, no. 32, pp.42-64;

S. Benhabib (1986), *Critique, Norm and Utopia: A Study of the Foundations of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press;

D. Cook (1995), 'The Sundered Totality: Adorno's Freud-Marxism', in *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour*, Vol 25, Part 2, pp.191-215.

²D. Held (1990), *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas*, Cambridge: Polity. Esp. Chapter Four, 'The changing structure of the family and the individual: critical theory and psychoanalysis', pp.110-147.

³The cover notes to *The Frankfurt School* tell us that Wiggershaus has written a book on Adorno (1987, München: C.H. Beck), and I expect he gets into more detail there. I look forward to its translation.

⁴D. Baines (1992), *The Influence of Freudian Psychology on the Critical Theory of T.W. Adorno. M. Horkheimer and H. Marcuse*, Unpublished PhD MS, University of Nottingham.

childhood expectation adds a richness to Frankfurt School conceptions of utopia.

The most recent book providing a substantive engagement with the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's theory is *Perversion And Utopia* by Joel Whitebook.¹ Whitebook is notable among Adorno commentators in that he is a practising psychoanalyst, and this facilitates his overall sensitivity to the role of psychoanalysis in Adorno. It also occasionally influences Whitebook's moments of frustration at Adorno's refusal of resolution: Whitebook, after all, has patients to consider. Accordingly, at various suitable points I both take advantage of Whitebook's lucid explanations, and critically extend them in order to give due weight to Adorno's philosophically negative psychoanalysis.

The tendency of more general texts on Adorno and the Frankfurt School to neglect the substance of Adorno's psychoanalysis has often been a conscious one, justified by the need for an academic division of labour. Introductory texts focus on Horkheimer's overall concept of critical theory. For example, Raymond Geuss observes that for the Frankfurt School,

the theories of Marx and Freud exhibit such strong similarities in their essential epistemic structure that in their view they don't represent two different kinds of theory, but merely two instances of a single new type. The general name given to this type of theory of which Marxism and psychoanalysis are the two main instances is 'critical theory.'²

Critical theories are enlightening, emancipatory and reflective.³ But Geuss, 'in the interests of simplicity and concreteness,' focuses on Marx and restricts himself 'to only occasional passing references to

¹J. Whitebook (1995), *Perversion and Utopia: A Study in Psychoanalysis And Critical Theory*, Cambridge (MA): MIT Press.

²R. Geuss (1981), *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, Cambridge: CUP, p.1.

³Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, p.2.

psychoanalysis.¹ The hidden implication is that it is simpler to explicate the general theoretical concept, critical theory, using Marx, because he provides a more concrete example of such a theory. This implication betrays the equal status given to psychoanalysis in Geuss's first statement.

Like Geuss, Paul Connerton seeks to demonstrate psychoanalysis's status as a critical theory. But he provides more detail on Freud's method to support his classification:

Freud's 'subject' suffers under the compulsive pressure of restricted patterns of behaviour and perception; he deludes himself about his own actions; he colludes, by internalisation, with the constraints that have been imposed upon him. Only by grasping these illusions can the subject, as it were, free himself from himself: he liberates himself from the internalised conflicts which blinded him in his self-awareness and lamed him in his actions. Critique is here grounded in a specific experience, which is set down in Freud's psychoanalysis, in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind*, and in Marx's critique of ideology: the experience of an emancipation by means of critical insight into relations of power, the strength of which derives, at least in part, from the fact that these relationships have not been seen through.²

The specificities of each variety of demystifying experience means that Geuss's focus on the general concept of critical theory does not work when applied to Adorno's conception of the relation between Marxism and psychoanalysis. Jessica Benjamin notes their commonality, but also alerts us to the difficulties of integrating them. Psychoanalysis, like Marxism, reveals hidden social processes:

human beings affect one another, particularly in the process of child rearing, and therefore [...] what appear to be innate or natural *properties* of a person are actually the result of social interaction and human agency. In this

¹Geuss, *The Idea of a Critical Theory*, p.2.

²P. Connerton (1980), *The Tragedy of Enlightenment, an essay on the Frankfurt School*, Cambridge, CUP, p.25.

sense, the psychoanalytic perspective represented a profound demystification comparable to Marx's analysis, which revealed the origins of commodity values in the human labour performed in social production. Despite this parallel, the task of synthesising the work of Marx and Freud is more difficult than it may at first appear.¹

So, rather than taking the work of Marx and Freud as instances of a single type of theory, Adorno instead reminds us of the split between them. Adorno conceives the recalcitrant incompatibility of psychological and social analysis, which besets any attempt to form a unified social psychology, as a product of the modern estrangement of individual and society: 'to unify psychology and social science by employing the same concepts at different levels of abstraction necessarily amounts *in concreto* to a harmonisation of actual conflict.'² This is why Deborah Cook titles her paper on Adorno's Freudo-Marxism 'The Sundered Totality.'³ This could be described as a kind of mimetic sociology of knowledge: we can't unify Freud and Marx because we can't unify self and society.⁴

This differentiates Adorno's fragmented theory from other Frankfurt School approaches, which attempted just such a synthesis. Erich Fromm, who first produced a distinctive Frankfurt School version of the Freud-Marx synthesis already developed by Wilhelm Reich, definitely hoped for a direct translation between the concepts of the two theoretical systems. Phil Slater explains how Reich and Fromm refused the orthodox Marxist rejection of bourgeois psychology, by pointing out some intriguing commonalities:

¹Benjamin, 'The End of Internalisation', p.42.

²T.W. Adorno (1967), 'Sociology and Psychology, Part One', trans. Irving Wohlfarth, in *New Left Review*, no. 47, pp.67-80, p.70.

³Cook, 'The Sundered Totality.' Cook's title, like my discussion here, is drawing on Jay. His *Adorno* has a chapter called 'The Fractured Totality: Society and the Psyche,' pp.82-110. He quotes from Adorno's 'Sociology and Psychology' on p.87.

⁴I owe this phrasing to a suggestion from Richard King. Also see Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p.111.

Fromm maintained that a largely acceptable psychology had been developed by Freud: psychoanalysis was a materialist, historical and social science. The drive theory was compatible with Marxism, Fromm argued, since the 'drive constitution' only manifests itself in a dialectical interaction with the socio-historically specific 'life experiences'. Marx in his early writings had referred to man's 'drives' or 'instincts' (Triebe), and in *Capital* he accepted the primary nature of certain drives, referring to 'human nature in general' and 'human nature as modified in each historical epoch'.¹

This ambition of reconciling Freud and Marx² was carried on by Herbert Marcuse where Fromm left off. For example, in *Eros and Civilisation* Marx's surplus value is translated into the Freudianised 'surplus repression' required to produce it.³ Adorno did not attempt very many such translations, although he did lean on them covertly as the background for his more conceptually restrained formulations: 'Unlike his co-worker Herbert Marcuse, who developed a position in which he endeavoured to integrate psychoanalysis and Marxism, Adorno made no systematic attempt to reconcile the two theories.'⁴ Some introductions to Adorno tend to forget this and rest content with reading his psychology through his sociology, levelling out the distinctive contribution of psychoanalysis. I try to reverse this perspective. But since I will be laying a heavy emphasis on psychoanalysis in this thesis as a corrective to its relative neglect, it is as well to admit here that my strategy of emphasising

¹P. Slater (1977), *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.96. Marx's use of the German *Triebe* instead of *Instinkt* duplicates Freud's terminology, reinforcing the historically flexible nature of human drives, as opposed to animal instincts. Whitebook explains the *Trieb/Instinkt* distinction in *Perversion and Utopia*, p.186-187, using it to refute the accusation that Freud is biologicistic.

²Jay calls the reconciling efforts of Reich and Marcuse a 'shotgun marriage.' *Adorno*, p.85.

³H. Marcuse (1987), *Eros and Civilisation: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud*, London: Ark.

⁴Cook, 'The Sundered Totality', p.191.

the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's theory has its own limits. Corrections may easily become over-corrections. Readings such as Jameson's and Geuss's, which emphasise the sociological dimension of Adorno's philosophy, are justifiably encouraged both by Adorno's key position at the Institute for Social Research, and by his penetrating analysis of the primacy of the social totality over the individual, which remained a *leitmotif* of his work. He wrote to Leo Lowenthal in 1954, 'the emphasis of what we are doing lies, I would think, in a theory of society and not in ephemeral material.'¹

As Jessica Benjamin² points out by laying stress on the concept of internalisation, psychoanalysis is of interest to the Frankfurt theorists because it uncovers social processes in the depths of the mind. Adorno's theory as a whole accordingly provides an important critique of psychologism, deploying a Hegelian-Marxist solution to the problem of constitution: 'the cognitions of Hegel and Marx penetrate to the inmost core of the so-called questions of constitution.'³ The long and horrific history of human labour is constitutive of subjectivity. In this, Adorno's Freudo-Marxism is orthodox enough. As Slater's remarks on Fromm and Marx (above) point out, drives are always socially mediated. Freud's primal id is actually the form inner nature takes when distorted by the action of social contradictions, and so Adorno takes it as both a symptom and a protest. It can be seen as a negative 'residue of freedom.'⁴ Therefore,

¹Adorno, in L. Lowenthal (1989), *Critical Theory and the Frankfurt Theorists: Lectures - Correspondence - Conversations*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, p.71.

²Benjamin, 'The End of Internalisation'.

³T.W. Adorno (1978), 'Subject and Object', in Arato and Gebhardt (eds), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, pp.497-511, p.511.

⁴T.W. Adorno & M. Horkheimer (1986), *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming, London: Verso, p.ix. C.F. Alford puts it like this: 'the not easily satisfied libido becomes, in a sense, the locus of the promise of critical theory itself, the promise of happiness.' C.F. Alford (1985), 'Nature and Narcissism: The Frankfurt School', in *New German Critique*, no. 36, Fall 1985, pp.174-192, p.191. Alford suggests the danger of this formulation is

Adorno's nuanced grasp of the problems of conformity and adjustment does not spare Freud, and underlies the remarks that Adorno directs against psychoanalysis in *Minima Moralia*.

But the sharp tone of those remarks encourages Jameson to uncharacteristically reduce Adorno's assessment of Freud to a common-sense appreciation that everything has two sides. Almost as a symptom of the marginalisation of psychoanalysis in his book, these significant remarks are relegated to Jameson's footnotes:

We have all probably overstressed the 'Freudo-Marxism' of the Frankfurt School, which is finally realised only in Marcuse. The attacks on Freud in *Minima Moralia* are ferocious (see for example, No. 136¹), although it is true that he is there seen as a profoundly *American* thinker whose 'therapy' goes along with obligatory good health, clean teeth and a permanent smile on your face. This assessment of Freud should be juxtaposed with the remarkable appreciation in 'Sociology and Psychology'.²

However, in directing us to *Minima Moralia* and suggesting that its negative remarks be contrasted with more appreciative ones to be found elsewhere, Jameson points us in a direction that ultimately suggests the need for understanding psychoanalytic theory in a more dialectical manner than his talk of using Freud as a theoretical supplement. *Minima Moralia* and 'Sociology and Psychology' cannot be seen as respectively providing negative and positive assessments of Freud, although it is true that 'Sociology and Psychology' recognises a therapeutic role for

that the isolation of the libido becomes the only guardian of its critical capacity, and that therefore its invocation is utopian.

¹I think Jameson means no. 36. No. 136 does criticise the concept of sublimation in Freud, but no. 36 contains the argument Jameson describes.

²Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p.254(n4). See Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology, Part One';

T.W. Adorno (1968), 'Sociology and Psychology, Part Two', trans. Irving Wohlfarth, in *New Left Review*, no. 48, pp.79-97;

T.W. Adorno (1994), *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott, London and New York: Verso.

psychoanalysis, whereas *Minima Moralia* is entirely sceptical about therapy. But in general, the later paper is very much a development of the earlier book. Each provides an immanent teasing out of the aporias of analysis, oriented, as with all Adorno's criticism, to rescuing its object, not throwing it out with the bath-water or uncritically duplicating it.

Nevertheless, I argue that Adorno's account of Freud sometimes adopts an acid tone which encourages anti-psychoanalytical readings even when his critique is strictly immanent to Freud's own discourse. Adorno's *penchant* for theoretical over-statement is really meant as a dialectical corrective, and is often stylistically breathtaking, but it nevertheless actually encourages the kind of surface reading that Adorno abhorred. Part of the force of Adorno's criticism generally is the sense of *schadenfreude* (pleasure at another's downfall) that he generates in the reader, who can be unconsciously pulled down the theoretical path Adorno's philosophy warns us to avoid - concentrating on the subtle and witty demolition of a great thinker, whilst missing the essential conservation of the theory that is the point of the exercise. Adorno mostly sublates, and rarely destroys, but his theoretical invective sometimes obscures this.¹

Accordingly, I continue this chapter with Adorno's most obvious uses of psychoanalysis, before covering his critique of Freud and moving on to examine the hidden depth dimension of Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis.

¹In order to avoid the same charge, I feel beholden to my sources to point out that even those I criticise here have influenced me substantially.

II: Adorno's Psychoanalysis of Authoritarian Irrationalism.

In this Section I provide a short summary of Adorno's direct use of psychoanalysis to study social phenomena. *The Authoritarian Personality* is the most famous of such applications, but Adorno's later analysis in 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda'¹ usefully compresses some of the ideas of the earlier book.

Adorno's theory of fascist propaganda shows that in his opinion current social experience does not simply produce an immediate response in a fully present adult consciousness. Such responses are always, in part, determined by more primal and elusive past experiences of intimate family life, *which are themselves social in their origins*. Ideologies of individualism which operate over a monopolistic economic base exert stresses on family life which play a role in determining experience within the crumbling private sphere. As Horkheimer put it in the 1930s: 'The growing child experiences the influence of reality according as [sic.] the latter is reflected in the mirror of the family circle.'² Adorno's more acute grasp of the relative autonomy of psychological laws prompts his later development of Horkheimer's basic point. Adorno adds a more sustained psychoanalytical depth dimension:

'Psychodynamics' is the name given to the reproduction of social conflicts in the individual, but it is not a mere mirror-image of existing social tensions. Its development in isolation from society reproduces from within the

¹Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda'. Jay discusses this paper and its link with theories of familial authority in *Adorno*, p.91-2.

²M. Horkheimer (1989), 'Authority and The Family', in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, New York: Continuum, pp.47-129, p.98. For useful considerations of Horkheimer's theory of authority, see Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School*, pp.105-108; J. Benjamin (1978), 'Authority and the Family Revisited: or, A World Without Fathers?', in *New German Critique*, no. 13 1978, Telos Press, pp.35-57; Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, pp.131-137.

pathogenesis of a social totality over which the curse of lonely individuation hovers.¹

The unconsciously mediated nature of adult experience is illustrated by Adorno's demonstration that the actions of the clean-living Aryan youth during pogroms and rallies are an unconscious testament to the connection between anal-sadistic traits, such as obsessively reactive cleanliness, and authoritarianism. Psychoanalysis shows how the attempt to eradicate the Jews can be understood as being, in part, the logical correlate of the fascist obsession with hygiene.

According to Adorno's Freudian analysis, the conversion of intra-group rivalries into a powerful means of integration through the construction of a reaction-formation, the fascist brotherhood, leaves residues of competitiveness which require displacement onto out-groups to maintain unity. The childhood precursors for these mechanisms are the dynamics of Oedipal jealousy and sibling rivalry, in which repression and reaction-formations eventually convert anal-sadistic impulses into love. These ego defences erected against intra-familial sadistic impulses are connected with the conversion of coprophilic anal currents into cleanliness, which may also leave residues of self-criticism that have to be displaced onto those identified as dirty, impure or immoral. Like all reaction-formations, and especially if an authoritarian ethos has exacerbated a narcissistic ambivalence towards significant others, feelings of love and purity are unstable. Traces of former rivalries or infantile pleasure in the excremental may provide a regressive pull towards competitive relations or perversion, which has to be displaced or projected onto extra-familial substitutes. Supposedly degenerate races become ideal

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology, Part One', p.77.

projection screens onto which well-adjusted storm troopers can discharge their ego-alien perversities and sadistic impulses:

Impulses which the subject will not admit as his own even though they are most assuredly so, are attributed to the object - the prospective victim. The actual paranoiac has no choice but to obey the laws of his sickness. But in Fascism this behavior is made political; the object of the illness is deemed true to reality; and the mad system becomes the reasonable norm in the world and deviation from it a neurosis.¹

Developing these psychoanalytic lines of thought, Adorno uses Freud's interpretation of the manifest symbolism in dreams of sibling rivalry to explain the deep psychical resonance of the recurring propaganda images that sought to identify the Jews as a suitable out-group for discharging resentment *via* association with dirty vermin, especially rats and insects.²

Freud's original reference to such symbolism is in *The Interpretation of Dreams*: 'Small animals and vermin are substitutes for little children, e.g. undesired sisters or brothers.'³ Freud draws attention to the unconscious persistence of sibling rivalry behind affectionate adult relationships.⁴ In *The Authoritarian Personality* such theories play an important role in Adorno's analysis of the manipulative type of potential fascist. Adorno's example of this type is a cold and withdrawn insect toxicologist:

The interest of this boy in entomology may be due to his regarding the insects, which are both 'repulsive' and weak, as ideal objects for his manipulation. [...] This, of

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.187.

²Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda', p.131-132. Adorno cites Lowenthal on this subject.

³S. Freud (1900), *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Most references are to the 1932 edition, London: George Allen and Unwin, p.339.

⁴Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1932), pp.242-249.

course, covers only a superficial aspect. It is well known from psychoanalysis that insects and vermin serve frequently as symbols for siblings. The fantasies involved here may be traces of the little boy's wish to beat his little brother until he 'keeps quiet'. Manipulativeness may be one form in which death wishes for the siblings are allowed to come to the fore. 'Organisers' are frequently persons who want to exercise domineering control over those who are actually their *equals* - substitutes for the siblings over whom they wish to rule, like the father, as the next best thing, if they cannot kill them.¹

The link between sibling rivalry, dirt and a reactive fascist will-to-purity is provided by the infantile speculations connecting pregnancy and birth with the operations of the bowel.² The autonomy-sapping and competitive social world of the insecure and crisis-ridden Weimar Republic, with its asset-stripped economy, re-cathected painful memories of primal competition for that most complicated of resources, secure familial love. Propaganda images portraying the Jews (blamed for economic shortfalls in Germany) in the same way that infantile dreams portray "dirty" siblings (blamed for emotional shortfalls within the family) proved to be a potent ideological tool. But Nazi propaganda did not exploit such basic anxieties so effectively because Goebbels had read about Freud. He 'simply turns his own unconscious outward [...] Without knowing it, he is thus able to speak and act in accord with psychological theory for the simple reason that the psychological theory is true.'³

More disturbingly, psychoanalysis can also show that the florid Nazi psychosis does not differ, dynamically speaking, from the less spectacular authoritarian neurosis that continues as a dark undercurrent in the whole liberal West. Adorno regarded 'the survival of Nazism *within* democracy

¹Adorno, *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.371, p.371(n).

²S. Freud (1908), 'On the Sexual Theories of Children', in Freud (1991), *On Sexuality* (PFL 7), pp.183-204, p.197-198.

³Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda', p.133.

as potentially more threatening than the survival of fascist tendencies against democracy'.¹ Accordingly, Adorno uses analytic concepts to shed light not just on overtly fascist propaganda, but also on the rabble-rousing religious authoritarians of the American South and Midwest² and the substitute gratifications of the culture industry. Following a formulation of Leo Lowenthal's, who influenced Adorno's theory of anti-Semitism and overall reception of Freud, Adorno liked to refer to all such phenomena as 'psychoanalysis in reverse.' As Lowenthal explains, the phrase is intended as a way into understanding various 'more or less constantly manipulated devices to keep people in permanent psychic bondage, to increase and reinforce neurotic and even psychotic behavior culminating in perpetual dependency on a "leader" or on institutions or products.'³

The point of Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis is not to privilege it as a total explanation of such social injustice, but to use it to reveal the deep-seated nature of the irrational drives that such injustice always calls upon, and which no other psychological theory effectively elucidates: 'Psychological dispositions do not actually cause fascism; rather, fascism defines a psychological area which can be successfully exploited by the forces which promote it for entirely nonpsychological reasons of self-interest.'⁴

Stephen Crook has shown the psychoanalytic commonality between Adorno's analysis of fascist propaganda and his studies of the culture

¹Adorno, in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.536.

²T.W. Adorno (1975), 'The Psychological Technique of Martin Luther Thomas's Radio Addresses ', in Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften* (9.1), Frankfurt: Suhrkamp Verlag. This paper, originally written in 1943 but not published, is discussed throughout Stephen Crook's paper 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', esp. p.1, p.9-11, p.14 and p.17. I am indebted to his account of it.

³Lowenthal, *Critical Theory and the Frankfurt Theorists*, p.51.

⁴Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda,' p.135. See Jay's discussion of this statement in *Adorno*, p.94. Jay sees it as a correction of psychologistic receptions of *The Authoritarian Personality*.

industry, using the more general term 'authoritarian irrationalism' to cover this whole range of psychosocial pathologies:

To state the case crudely, Adorno saw the commodified American culture of mass consumption, movies, jazz and radio serials as putting into play the same basic psychodynamic principles that formed the basis of fascism; psychological dependency and social conformism.¹

Crook accordingly recognises that 'Adorno's Freudianism is involved in his most penetrating insights,'² but is nevertheless one of those who thinks it could be stripped out and translated into a more up-to-date theoretical paradigm: 'His hypotheses could be articulated, and made available for investigation, in a number of other discourses of the human subject, from interactionist social psychology to postmodernist culture theory.'³

Crook's first suggestion for an alternative paradigm is more plausible than his second, but neither could really understudy for the deeper role of psychoanalysis in Adorno's philosophy. The mistake is to think that the role of psychoanalysis in Adorno is exhausted by his directly psychoanalytical conceptions of character formation and the unconscious depth dimension of social phenomena.⁴ Vital though these are, Crook correctly suggests these concepts are better set out by other Freud-Marxists, such as Reich, Fromm and Marcuse. However, Crook unwisely suggests that in comparison to these theorists, 'Adorno was blind to gender issues and to questions of sexuality.'⁵

Yet, in *The Authoritarian Personality*, high scorers on the fascism-scale are often sexually conventional. 'In women there is special emphasis

¹Crook, 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', p.10.

²Crook, 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', p.21.

³Crook, 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', p.22.

⁴Crook, 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', p.22.

⁵Crook, 'Adorno and Authoritarian Irrationalism', p.21.

on neatness and femininity, in men upon being a "regular" he-man.¹ The idea of a taboo on maternal dependency and a compensatory hyper-masculinity is central to the theory. In male authoritarians, such dependency 'remains for the most part an ego-alien trend which can seldom be expressed directly because it violates the image (ego ideal) of the *normal, masculine man*: rugged, practical, realistic, earthbound, independent.'² Authoritarian women exhibit a similarly conformist sexual identity, to the extent that the rejection of stereotypical femininity is a predictor of low-scoring women. One such woman is described by Adorno as a 'genuine liberal.'³ She 'has none of the pretty-pretty femininity so frequently seen in high subjects, and would probably scorn the feminine wiles and schemes practised by such women.'⁴

Adorno's most important thoughts on sexuality and sexual difference are to be found in a more developed form in his philosophical and literary texts. *Minima Moralia*, written alongside *The Authoritarian Personality* and obviously influenced by its data, develops a harsh critique of both male and female identity, which together form a debased erotic whole. Of the cinematic portrayal of virile masculinity, Adorno says this:

Its archetype is the handsome dinner-jacketed figure returning late to his bachelor flat, switching on the indirect lighting and mixing himself a whisky and soda: the carefully recorded hissing of the mineral water says what the arrogant mouth keeps to itself; that he despises anything that does not smell of smoke, leather and shaving cream, particularly women, which is why they, precisely, find him irresistible.⁵

And of the women who fall for such men;

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.358.

²Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.292.

³Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.383.

⁴Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.384.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.45-46.

The femininity which appeals to instinct, is always exactly what every woman has to force herself by violence - masculine violence - to be: a she-man. One need only have perceived, as a jealous male, how such feminine women have their femininity at their finger-tips - deploying it just where needed, flashing their eyes, using their impulsiveness - to know how things stand with the sheltered unconsciousness, unmarred by intellect.¹

This makes it clear that Adorno is certainly not gender blind. A concern with sexuality is a distinctive feature of his work. Whether his work is misogynist or not may be another question. I return to this issue in Sections IV and V of this chapter, and again in Chapters Two and Three, suggesting that psychoanalytic considerations of sexual difference play a key part in the development of Adorno's dialectical respect for otherness. However, it is first necessary to establish that Adorno's Freudianism is the product of a sustained immanent critique of Freud.

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.96.

III. Rescuing Orthodoxy: Adorno's Immanent Critique of Freud.

The main section of *Minima Moralia* on psychoanalysis (Nos. 36-40) commences with the placing of a ban on psychoanalytic speculation. This seemingly bolsters claims that psychoanalysis is relatively unimportant in Adorno's critical theory. But Adorno nevertheless proceeds to provide such psychoanalytic speculation. The ban against it is erected on the grounds that the primacy of the economy has all but eradicated Freud's subject, psychological man. The immediate transgression of the ban relies on Adorno's characteristic use of the word 'if', which precedes it. Adorno's 'if' registers his conviction that the conformist fate of a theory does not condemn it completely. In a world in which even opposition is co-opted by the system it opposes, nothing can escape this fate, and the task of critical theory is to rescue those elements of traditional theory which reach beyond themselves through their contradictions.

The flavour of Adorno's application of such an idea to psychoanalysis can be captured by quoting the passage setting out his ban on psychology which is then transgressed:

If such a thing as a psycho-analysis of today's prototypical culture were possible; if the absolute predominance of the economy did not beggar all attempts at explaining conditions by the psychic life of their victims; and if the psychoanalysts had not long since sworn allegiance to those conditions - such an analysis would needs show the sickness proper to the time to consist precisely in normality.¹

The motor of this theoretical 'if' is Adorno's development of Hegel's insight that knowledge of a limit is an opening towards its sublation. Adorno qualifies Hegel's idealism through a resolute refusal of

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.58.

the pretence that this opening can be theoretically consummated. Adorno directs us to Hegel when he tells us that Hegel's method 'schooled that of *Minima Moralia*.'¹ Hegel's transgression of limits through their identification is most famously carried through in the critique of Kant in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*.² Kant wanted to insulate the understanding from the in-itself via the mediation of appearance. But Hegel shows that knowledge of this limit presupposes the interpenetration of the moments, allowing a study of self-consciousness to become a study of the absolute: 'This curtain [of appearance...] is therefore drawn away.'³ Adorno's deployment of this insight through a refusal of its idealism, as captured in his use of the word 'if,' plays a central role in perhaps his most important philosophical paper, 'Subject and Object.' There, Adorno's muscular workout in the training room of German Idealism proceeds using the same technique at work in *Minima Moralia*: 'If speculation on the state of reconciliation were permitted...'⁴

In *Minima Moralia*, Adorno's 'if' mourns the colonisation of psychoanalysis by the very forces it was once equipped to expose. Where Freud pointed out the thorough-going fragility of the bourgeois subject, revisionist or humanistic psychoanalysis all too often celebrates that subject's own ideological self-concept as a normative ideal type. In other words, Adorno draws part of his justification for continuing to ruminate on matters psychological from his recognition that psychoanalysis once possessed 'better possibilities,'⁵ betrayed since 'it itself became a part of hygiene.'⁶

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.16.

²See the section 'Force and the Understanding: Appearance and the Supersensible World', in G.W.F. Hegel (1977), *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford: OUP, pp.79-103.

³Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.103.

⁴Adorno, *Subject and Object*, p.499.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.62.

⁶Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.58-59.

Adorno exposes the dirt lurking behind the antiseptic social facade supported on the psychological front-line by the adjustment orientation of conformist psychoanalysis, which is dedicated to producing 'the regular guy' and 'the popular girl.'¹ This passage is a good example of Adorno's characteristic style of immanent critique: his rather glib attack on the complicity of socially functional psychotherapy with the slum-clearing mentality of modernity nicely sums up Freud's own theory of the repressive reaction-formation: 'the brightest rooms are the secret domain of faeces.'²

Adorno's fears about the fate of psychoanalysis take their cue from those of Freud. Freud feared that pragmatic eclecticism would water down his theories, accusing 'American physicians and writers' of making a 'hotchpotch of psychoanalysis and other elements and quote[ing] this procedure as evidence of their broadmindedness, whereas it only proves their lack of judgement.'³ Freud also levelled similarly dogmatic criticisms at all of the European revisionists from Adler and Jung to Stekel and Rank. Clark shrewdly suggests that the warm American reception of heretical currents within psychoanalysis, especially Jung's, heavily coloured Freud's view of America. The tone of Eurocentric distaste running through Freud's account of American life is remarkably congruent with Adorno's assessment in *Minima Moralia*. 'In the Freud household the phrase '*Echt Amerikanisch*' - real or typically American - became, through what they learned of American life from Anna, synonymous with the superficial or the flashy.'⁴

As Russell Jacoby has made clear, it was the unpopular theories so important to Freud, including the notion that primal death-wishes and

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.58.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.59.

³Freud, in R.W. Clark (1980), *Freud: The Man and the Cause*, London: Jonathan Cape, p.279.

⁴Clark, *Freud*, p.278.

infantile sexuality were the norm among small children, that were usually the first victim of superficial broadmindedness. Freud was also against the related conversion of psychoanalysis into a mere medical technique. Freud's concern is similar to Adorno's criticism of a purely hygienic analysis. Freud feared that a medical emphasis neglected the fact that his discoveries were 'a basis for a very grave philosophy.'¹ He warned 'We do not consider it at all desirable for psychoanalysis to be swallowed up by medicine and to find its last resting place in a textbook of psychiatry under the heading of "Methods of treatment."'²

Jacoby shows how Adorno follows an identical line in his critique of analytical revisionism. The latter was heavily influenced by the cultural, sociological and socialist inclinations of the neo-Freudian schools, especially those of Adler, Horney and Fromm.³ Adorno rejects their apparently progressive concern to 'add' sociology to Freud, arguing that any nuanced theory of society actually needs orthodox psychoanalysis to explain the depth dimension of socialisation, which is writ large in the theory of the ego's battle with the recalcitrant id:

Rigorous psychoanalytic theory, alive to the clash of psychic forces, can better drive home the objective character especially of economic laws as against subjective impulses, than theories which, in order at all costs to establish a continuum between society and psyche, deny the fundamental axiom of analytical theory, the conflict between id and ego.⁴

Respect for this unfashionable axiom conforms to Adorno's aphoristic defence of orthodoxy over revisionism: 'In psycho-analysis

¹Freud, in Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, p.124.

²Freud, in Jacoby, *Social Amnesia*, p.123.

³Also see Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p.92-93 on Adorno's orthodox critique of revisionism generally and Horney in particular.

⁴Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology, Part One,' p.75.

nothing is true except the exaggerations.¹ Adorno's psychoanalytic orthodoxy remained typical of the Frankfurt School theorists, even if his refusal to produce a social psychology did not. When Fromm began to abandon Freud's metapsychology in favour of humanist theories, it was the beginning of the end of his association with the School. Martin Jay sees the divergence between Fromm and the rest of the School as crucial in determining the future direction of critical theory: 'Adorno's full entry into Institute affairs at about the time that Fromm was leaving signified a crucial shift in the tone of the Frankfurt School's work.'²

Nevertheless, since the School wished to maintain an empirical research programme combining psychoanalysis and Marxism, in practice it could not manage without deploying more recent developments in psychoanalytic theory and working with analysts who would certainly not have shared Adorno's antipathy to therapeutic psychoanalysis. This tension is clear in *The Authoritarian Personality*, a text which owes a great deal to Fromm's theory, as well as to American ego-psychology. *The Authoritarian Personality* was also being researched at the same time (the 1940s) that Adorno was composing *Minima Moralia*. So Adorno was savaging mainstream psychotherapy even as he collaborated with analysts, using their knowledge to help turn his speculative ideas for a psychoanalytic questionnaire into a functional form (the famous F-Scale). These contradictions dog Adorno's immanent critique of Freud, which claims to rescue Freud's orthodoxies by exposing their reactionary traits. In my next section, I suggest that Freud was not quite the reactionary Adorno portrays, by further unpacking Adorno's critique of psychoanalysis.

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.49, and see my Chapter Two.

²Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p.101

IV: Adorno's Caricature of Freud's Repressive Tendency.

In 'Sociology and Psychology' Adorno exposes the inconsistencies of Freud's metapsychology, focusing on the difficulties of resolving the contradictions between the systematic and adjectival uses of the concept of the unconscious, which dog Freud's later theory of id, ego and super ego. The ego is meant to be the agent of conscious rationality, but because adaptation to the reality principle involves submission to irrational social conditions, the ego has to deploy unconscious defence mechanisms to square the circle.¹ The endpoint of this argument is an insistence that the strict division of id and ego is real, but only as a result of repression. If adaptation to reality really was a rational route to satisfying the needs of the id, the unconscious defences would not be needed. Under unimaginably transformed conditions a sublation of the division could yield a psychic order in which differing impulses could grant each other independence rather than fighting wars of colonisation: mental health would then be a psychological togetherness through diversity, rather than a hierarchical system with the ego dominating the id:

The distinction between rational control of the instincts and simple repression becomes crucial - but in an 'irrational society' the ego can only fulfil the demand to tame the instincts by acting irrationally or unconsciously. The hope for rational self-control is utopian; it presupposes a rational social order whose realisation is not in sight.²

However, in Freud's favour, he does actually concede the possibility of such a utopia, and is closer to Adorno's position than Adorno allows.

¹Rose discusses some of these thoughts on Freud's metapsychology in *The Melancholy Science*, p.94.

²Benjamin, 'The End of Internalisation', p.43.

After all, according to Freud the ego is an outgrowth of the id, an attempt to achieve the id's wishes through a realistic grasp of the world outside it.¹ Freud is well aware that the defence mechanisms may become pathogenic processes, protecting the psyche from irrational demands which force the defences to imprison the ego they are trying to defend. In 'The Question of Lay Analysis' Freud recognises the problems of rigid egoism, stating that 'there is no natural opposition between ego and id; they belong together, and under healthy conditions cannot in practice be distinguished from each other.'²

Moreover, Freud's work makes it clear enough that such a situation is currently only an unobtainable ideal. Due to external conditions varying from family secrets to a client's class position, analysis may have little chance of achieving even its modest aim of converting neurotic misery into everyday unhappiness.³ In other words, 'healthy conditions' do not exist. Freud's insights on this subject doubtless require pushing in the direction of an explicit realisation that particular social interests, not just familial ones, actually use unhealthy conditions in the service of supposedly general aims, but Adorno is nevertheless guilty of over-doing his caricature of a repressive Freud.

In 'The Future of an Illusion', Freud's uneasy feelings about the aggressive and pleasure-seeking proclivities of 'the mass,' and the authoritarian tone he adopts when discussing it, are certainly conservative, if not downright reactionary:

It is just as impossible to do without control of the mass by a minority as it is to dispense with coercion in the work of

¹S. Freud (1923), *The Ego and the Id*, in Freud (1991), *On Metapsychology* (PFL 11), pp. 339-408, esp. pp.362-367.

²S. Freud (1926), *The Question of Lay Analysis*, in Freud (1993), *Historical and Expository Works on Psychoanalysis* (PFL 15), pp.279-364, p.301.

³S. Freud (1917), 'Analytic Therapy', in Freud (1991), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (PFL 1) Lecture 28, pp.501-518, esp. p.512-515.

civilisation. For masses are lazy and unintelligent; they have no love for instinctual renunciation, and they are not to be convinced by argument of its inevitability.¹

Yet Freud's conservative view of the mass is tempered by his liberal grasp of the factors that produce it, and his position is not really very far from Adorno's own, which is equally likely to offend those who subscribe to Marxist or romantic celebrations of proletarian consciousness. For example, Adorno refers to the masses interpellated by fascist propaganda as 'those strata of the population who suffer from senseless frustrations and therefore develop a stunted, irrational mentality.'² Both men would like an end to these conditions, and predict dire problems ahead if they continue. To his credit, Freud provides a forthright condemnation of the 'flagrant'³ class exploitation that produces the mass in the first place, and essentially concurs with Marx's predictions of revolution: 'It goes without saying that a civilisation which leaves so large a number of its participants unsatisfied and drives them into revolt neither has nor deserves the prospect of a lasting existence.'⁴

But Adorno actually attacks Freud at this very point, just as Freud invokes historically and materially determined revolt, coming close to a certain style of rationalist Marxism. Freud, like Marx, recommends looking reality in the eye and shrugging off the drug-like fantasies of religion. He thinks men have little to gain from imagining 'wide acres in the moon, whose harvest no one has ever yet seen,' and that they should therefore concentrate on this life:

¹S Freud (1927), *The Future of an Illusion*, in Freud (1991), *Civilisation, Society and Religion* (PFL 12), pp.179-242, p.186.

²Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda.', p.134.

³Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.191.

⁴Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.192.

By withdrawing their expectations from the next world and concentrating all their liberated energies into their life on earth, they will probably succeed in achieving a state of things in which life will become tolerable for everyone and civilisation no longer oppressive to anyone. Then, with one of our fellow-unbelievers [Heine], they will be able to say without regret: 'We leave heaven to the angels and the sparrows.'¹

For all its atheism, Adorno's heterodox Marxism does not want to give up on heaven or the imagination so easily,² and he detects in this passage an allegedly authoritarian antipathy towards pleasure and non-conformity which contaminates psychotherapy (and, one could add, puritanical currents within Marxism). Adorno would have it that 'if' one is going to generate speculative ideals at all, then utopia should surely be more than tolerable. Otherwise, even the revolutionary imagination finds itself duplicating the standards of this world.³ So we find Adorno defending certain elements of both hedonism and theology, against Freud:

The place in the *Future of an Illusion* where, with the worthless wisdom of a hard-boiled old gentleman, he [Freud] quotes the commercial-traveller's dictum about leaving heaven to the angels and the sparrows, should be set beside the passage in the *Lectures* where he damns in pious horror the perverse practises of pleasure-loving society. Those who feel equal revulsion for pleasure and paradise are indeed best suited to serve as objects: the empty, mechanised quality observable in so many who have undergone successful analysis is to be entered to the account not only of their illness but also of their cure, which dislocates what it liberates.⁴

According to Adorno's glib view of therapy, Freud reduces pleasure to a mere trick of the species deployed for its own reproduction, which

¹Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*, p.233-234.

²See my Chapter Two for more on Adorno's quasi-messianism.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.41.

⁴Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.61.

allows him to focus on adjusting the patient to enjoy whatever is deemed compatible with that reproduction in the given society. Adorno instead hints that something about taboo pleasures can transcend mere 'subservience to nature,'¹ which in a reality replete with a socially sedimented second nature is always in fact subservience to society. This concern with the repressed erotics of existence is a distinctive feature of Adorno's work. He even goes so far as to suggest that pleasure is the only real index of truth: 'He alone who could situate utopia in blind somatic pleasure, which, satisfying the ultimate intention, is intentionless, has a stable and valid idea of truth.'²

On this account, the derivation of theoretical impulses from infantile demands for total satisfaction does not have to be a wholly regressive phenomenon. It is just that present social circumstances tend to make sure that infantile standards are more likely to support narcissistic consumer societies than the image of their dissolution: 'the most powerful forces in our society seem to work against the development of mature narcissism.'³ This means that Adorno has to steer his theory of pleasure between the *Scylla* of condemning all existing happiness as false consciousness and the *Charybdis* of simply celebrating subterranean yearnings. Adorno's remarks on non-conformity, which spare neither the normal nor the pathological, are probably the best way to understand both his critique of Freud's reactionary traits, and his view of man's perverse search for a pleasure beyond that available in general, for the 'wide acres in the moon' slighted by Freud: 'Whatever qualities at present genuinely

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.61.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia* p.61. Jay cites this and notes that 'Adorno viewed psychology as the best guarantor of the individual's right to genuine corporeal satisfaction.' *Adorno*, p.88.

³C.F. Alford (1985, 'Nature and Narcissism: The Frankfurt School', in *New German Critique*, no. 36 Fall 1985, New York: Telos Press, pp.174-192, p.189.

anticipate a more human existence are always simultaneously, in the eyes of the existing order, damaged rather than harmonious things.¹

Freud supposedly betrays the potential of these damaged qualities, siding with the ego over the id and condemning the pleasure-seeking perversions that he accords so much scientific respect. Freud champions a rational logic amounting to an uncritical internalisation of the reality which insists that the infant must only enjoy that which is socially sanctioned: 'Freud's unenlightened enlightenment plays into the hands of bourgeois disillusion.'² Those who reject the available form of happiness on the grounds that the suffering of others contaminates it will be advised by psychoanalysis to grow up, by adjusting more successfully. Anyone who protests against this 'will be told gloatingly by psycho-analysis that it is just his Oedipus complex.'³

For Adorno, Freud's disillusion with the promise of a more universal happiness sanctions a permanent deferral of real gratification: under advanced capitalism, aim-inhibition must become total, and 'the diner must be satisfied with the menu.'⁴ Adorno accuses psychoanalysis of taking a conformist line, offering its subjects over to socially repressive manipulations of gratification. Adorno puritanically insists that

a cathartic method with a standard other than successful adaptation and economic success would have to aim at bringing people to a consciousness of unhappiness both general and - inseparable from it - personal, and at depriving them of the illusory gratifications by which the abominable order keeps a second hold on life inside them, as if it did not already have them firmly enough in its power from the outside.⁵

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.84.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.60.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.63.

⁴Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.139.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.62.

These ideas from *Minima Moralia* are re-stated in Adorno's later paper 'Sociology and Psychology':

The Freudian injunction 'where id was, there shall ego be', leaves an impression of stoical emptiness and hollowness. The 'healthy', well-adjusted individual is as little immune against crisis as the rational husbanding of one's resources is economic. [...] In adjusting to the mad whole the cured patient becomes really sick - which is not to imply that the uncured are any healthier.¹

Applied to erotic experience, this means that the dominant views of healthy sex prescribed by sexologists may well be problematic as a basis for judgements on pleasure, but that the perverse is not in-itself the promised land either. Adorno therefore resists the Baudelairian course of championing the flowers of evil which may spring from the persistence of infantile sexual orientations: 'So much is true in psycho-analysis that the ontology of Baudelairian modernity, like all those that followed it, answers the description of infantile partial instincts.'² Baudelaire tries to capture the potential energy of the perverse, but his addiction to the 'intoxication'³ produced by his violent images bears witness to the danger of attempting a direct appropriation of the seemingly unsocialised force of dark sexual impulses. Such appropriation runs the risk of duplicating the rationality it imagines it is escaping: 'what slips through the net is filtered by the net.'⁴

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology, Part One', p.78.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.236.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.237.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.85. Whitebook's *Perversion and Utopia* is a sustained attempt to deploy the force of perversity without capitulating to it. See especially his Chapter One: "'I can offer them no consolation": Freud's Ambivalent Critique of Civilization', pp.19-90. Whitebook plays the moralistic condemnation of perversion off against its celebration, clearly following Adorno's lead as a guide to the maze of contradictory approaches in contemporary psychoanalytic theory.

Adorno's attitude to sexual expression is clear in his discussion of the difference between the attitudes towards sexuality of autonomous art, which sublimates, and of the culture industry, which represses: 'Works of art are ascetic and unashamed; the culture industry is pornographic and prudish.'¹ Direct representations of sexuality usually defuse it.

Nevertheless, Adorno criticises Freud's distinction between repression and sublimation, effectively claiming that psychoanalysis manages to oscillate between oppressive and permissive attitudes towards sexuality. Freud 'vacillates, devoid of theory and swaying with prejudice, between negating the renunciation of instinct as repression contrary to reality, and applauding it as sublimation beneficial to culture.'²

But on close inspection, it appears that Adorno's own theory does the same, misrepresenting Freud along the way. As Adorno suggests, one can certainly find a condemnation of perversion in the introductory lecture on 'The Sexual Life of Human Beings' where Freud talks of 'these crazy, eccentric and horrible things'³ and provides his perhaps nervous audience with expressions of his own strictly scientific interest in these matters. He also maintains a clearly normative attitude, with firm ideas about the importance of a mature genital sexuality. That this normative drift was not merely theoretical, but was sometimes instantiated in Freud's therapy, can be deduced from a careful reading of his case studies. In the case of Little Hans, for example, Hans' recognition that his phobias were related to his Oedipal masturbation phantasies led to measures we could describe as repressive. Hans' analysis was conducted by his father, but Freud supervised the whole affair, explicitly instructing that the boy be

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.140.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.60.

³S. Freud (1917), 'The Sexual Life of Human Beings', in Freud (1991), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (PFL 1) Lecture 20, pp.344-361, p.347.

told he was quite right to suppress his onanism.¹ Freud was presumably also complicit with the more active intervention carried through by the father: 'to prevent your wanting to, this evening you're going to have a bag to sleep in.'² Freud walks an equivocal linguistic tightrope when he states that '*analysis replaces repression by condemnation*.'³ But Freud recognised the repressive side of the ideal of genital maturity lauded here. He is careful to give the impression that he was only supporting the boy's autonomous inclination towards a conscious suppression of his masturbation, not giving an authoritarian diktat from above.

More generally, in the same lecture in which Freud seemingly damns perversions, the judgement as to what is perverse or normal is qualified by the observation that the social classification of sexuality varies across history and culture. A strict application of psychoanalytic logic would rule out kissing, alongside coprophilia and masturbation, due to its identical etiology as a derivation from the infantile sexual stages (an oral, rather than an anal or Oedipal fixation).

That two of these three perversions are currently subject to a social taboo is not really the theoretical concern of the man of science who must ultimately learn to look beyond his personal moral standards. Careful phrases such as 'what is described as normal sexuality'⁴ should alert us to the fact that Freud always rejected the easy classification of 'us and them' that was, and to a large extent still is, the medical norm. Freud says that when discussing the various forms of sexuality 'indignation, an expression of our personal repugnance and an assurance that we ourselves do not share these lusts will obviously be of no help.'⁵

¹S. Freud (1909), 'Analysis of a Phobia in a Five-Year-Old Boy ("Little Hans")', in Freud (1990), *Case Histories I* (PFL 8), pp.167-307, p.191.

²Freud, "Little Hans", p.193.

³Freud, "Little Hans" p.301.

⁴Freud, 'The Sexual Life of Human Beings', p.348.

⁵Freud, 'The Sexual Life of Human Beings', p.348.

Adorno overdoes his caricature of the repressive Freud as a way of valorising his own concern for a "truer" libidinal satisfaction, whilst simultaneously chastising psychoanalysis for helping people towards their own compromise formations on whichever side of the shifting borderline between the normal and the perverse most suits them. On this subject, I share Whitebook's frustration at Adorno's refusal of synthesis, which is a rigid no-compromise position.

Even as Freud defends his theory that infantile sexuality has to be repressed and sublimated to allow the libido to cement the wider ties of civilised life, he criticises the rigid prohibitions which insist 'that there shall be a single kind of sexual life for everyone' and which therefore become 'the source of serious injustice.'¹ Here, Freud is championing the pervert's right to sexual satisfaction, not condemning it.

There is evidence that in his clinical work, as well as in his theoretical writing, Freud exercised a tolerance for variations in adult sexual orientation. Unlike many of his followers, Freud refused to classify homosexuality as a neurosis: overt homosexuals are usually sane, according to the formula that perversion is the direct expression of that which a neurosis struggles to control: '*neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions*.'² Freud consequently held out little prospect for psychoanalytically influencing sexual object choice, and further insisted that 'a very considerable measure of latent or unconscious homosexuality can be detected in all normal people.'³

Freud's tolerance, admittedly often only pragmatic (as his use of the concept of 'normal people' and associated preference for latent

¹S. Freud (1930), *Civilisation and its Discontents*, in Freud (1991), *Civilisation, Society and Religion* (PFL 12), pp.243-340, p.294.

²S. Freud (1905), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (PFL 7), pp.33-170, p.80.

³S. Freud (1920), 'The Psychogenesis of a Case of Homosexuality in a Woman', in Freud (1991), *Case Histories II* (PFL 9), pp.367-400, p.399.

homosexuality reveals), is at times lacking altogether in Adorno's own writing. Having deplored the supposed repression of perversion by Freud, Adorno's clever dialectic of health and sickness would have it both ways. The implication is that Adorno would see Freud's pragmatism as a "selling out" of the deeper possibilities of the infantile impulses which underlie adult perversion. In a less repressive world some of these impulses could be the basis for a more open and sensuously material relationship, both between subjects and between subject and object. But Adorno's ascetic theoretical respect for the potentiality of that which currently seems perverse leads him into a few repressive gestures of his own. For example, Adorno tends to retain a pejorative use of Freud's notion of homosexual libido, correctly demonstrating its unconscious deployment by fetishistic fascist collectives,¹ but neglecting Freud's basic point, that aim-inhibited homosexual libido is the source of all fraternal bonds, not just fascistic ones: 'homosexual tendencies [...] help to constitute the social instincts, thus contributing an erotic factor to friendship and comradeship, to *esprit de corps* and to the love of mankind in general.'²

In his discussion of the homosexual component of the fascist brotherhood, Adorno neglects the far more obvious persecution of manifest homosexuality by that same collective. Given that persecution, Adorno's further claim that the point of differentiation between normal groups and fascistic ones might actually be a dis-inhibition of homosexual libido, i.e. that *overt* homosexuality contributed to fascist cohesion in Germany, seems to be a misguidedly direct application of his theoretical

¹Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda', p.122.

²S. Freud (1911), 'Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a case of Paranoia (Schreber)', in Freud (1991), *Case Histories II* (PFL 9), pp.131-226, p.198.

dialectic of asceticism and permissiveness.¹ A better insight to be obtained from the psychoanalytic theory is that the close-knit (if largely aim-inhibited) homoeroticism of the fascist collective can gratify one impulse (latent homosexuality), whilst the persecution of manifest homosexuality satisfies the opposite mental current (repudiation of homosexuality), in a classic symptomatic compromise formation. In paranoia, the repudiation of homosexuality is the motive force of psychosis,² suggesting that the psychosocial libidinal economy of fascism is in this respect truly a mass psychosis.

It is also possible to imagine a justifiable critical version of Adorno's pejorative usage of the concept of homosexual libido, which he turns on psychoanalysis itself. The following passage, for example, could be read in different ways. Is it a dialectical precursor of Irigaray's attack on the homosexuality of patriarchal psychoanalysis and society, a projective symptom of Adorno's own struggle with homosexuality (rumours of a difficult early affair with Kracauer persist), or both?

That large sensitivity to difference which is the hallmark of the truly humane develops out of the most powerful experience of difference, that of the sexes. In reducing everything it calls unconscious, and ultimately all individuality, to the same thing, psychoanalysis seems to be the victim of a familiar homosexual mechanism, the inability to perceive differences. Homosexuals exhibit a certain experiential colour-blindness, an incapacity to apprehend individuality: women are, in the double sense, 'all the same' to them.³

At first glance Adorno here comes close to betraying his own critique of a greedy, orally-incorporative reason. Most of his work

¹Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda,' p.177-178(n7). Jay suggests something similar in *Adorno*, p.93, noting Adorno's 'traditional bias' against homosexuality.

²Freud, 'Psychoanalytic Notes on a Case of Paranoia', pp.196-201.

³Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two,' p.96.

condemns instrumental reason as the diner's gaze on the roast,¹ but here he suggests that only the sexually interested man can understand what a woman is, as well as providing a more obvious slight to the cognitive capacities of homosexual men. However, certain remarks of Freud's in *Civilisation and its Discontents* keep open the possibility that Adorno's real target here is not homosexuality *per se*, but the exclusion of women from the centre of civilisation, which Freud celebrates as a sort of male club: 'The work of civilization has become increasingly the business of men, it confronts them with ever more difficult tasks and compels them to carry out instinctual sublimations of which women are little capable.'²

According to Freud, the devotion of male energy to these difficult tasks leads to a neglect of women that provokes their resentments, making them embittered opponents of civilisation. In *Minima Moralia* Adorno does not necessarily dispute this, but proposes a more positive reading of the situation Freud simply describes. He allows the possibility of reframing what appears to well-adjusted men like Freud as a perverse female antipathy to civilisation as a valid resistance to a patriarchal hegemony, not least in its positive effects on children. Adorno suggests that the memory of primary ties with the mother, rather than simply feeding the bonds of existing society, as Freud positively maintained (or as resolutely anti-family collectivists might negatively insist), is also the seed of a non-repressive order, 'the Utopia that once drew sustenance from motherly love.'³

Freud should know that those elusive 'wide acres in the moon' invoked by the theological and hedonistic imagination, which seek for more than pragmatic toleration (and deserve more than condemnation), cannot be mere phantoms. It is Freud who teaches us that the uncanny

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.30.

²Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.293.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.23.

(which certainly includes the affect-charged cultural associations of moon-gazing: the mother, madness, ecstasy) is always the primally familiar.¹

Despite his achievement in drawing our attention to the importance of such things, Freud in some ways encourages our estrangement from this primal material and the possibilities it holds. His efforts to translate this material into the language of consciousness are too strenuous, and something is lost in the process. Despite its weaknesses, Adorno's urge to rescue that something is worth pursuing further. In the next section of this chapter, I suggest Adorno's literary engagement with Proust remembers what Freud sometimes forgets.

¹S. Freud (1919), 'The "Uncanny"', in Freud (1990), *Art and Literature* (PFL 14), pp.335-367.

V: Childhood and Utopia.

The neglect of vital nuances of experience emerges whenever Freud betrays his respect for the particularities of the different modalities of childhood memory, which he over-eagerly converts into a normative developmental theory. Freud's hasty condemnation of vestiges of infantile experience as either regressions or perversions sometimes works against his goal of using those vestiges to criticise adult repressions. Theoretically conserving the alien character of those experiences is therefore an important project for Adorno. To put it in the language of Freud's theory of dreams: any tendency to leap too quickly from manifest content to latent thought must be restrained, and the fragments of memory set out carefully in a constellation allowing their own logic to emerge - or at least highlighting the distortion preventing that logic emerging. Jean Laplanche has shown that a refusal of synthesis is the revolutionary core of Freud's early method of free association, since obscured by the later psychoanalytic obsession with universal complexes.¹ This early core is one element of psychoanalysis which Adorno wants to conserve. Like Laplanche, Adorno notes how the open element of psychoanalytic free association decays as psychoanalysis grows over-confident. Thought 'entrusts itself impotently to processing by the doctor, who in any case knows everything before hand.'²

Developing the more subversive potential of Freud's concept of free association, with its utopian image of a free assemblage of psychical elements, some of Adorno's most characteristic work shows how psychoanalysis must become more receptive to those experiences which

¹J. Laplanche (1996), 'Psychoanalysis as Anti-Hermeneutics', in *Radical Philosophy*, no. 79 Sept-Oct 1996, pp.7-12.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.69.

remain stubbornly non-identical to adult conceptuality. Following Walter Benjamin, Adorno thinks that the perceptions of children may be a model for an undiminished theoretical capacity, capable of engaging in a freer association with the objects of cognition than normal adult consciousness. In a passage on Proust in *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno suggests that it is not only in their phantasies that things speak to children:

To the child it is self-evident that what delights him in his favorite village is found only there, there alone and nowhere else. He is mistaken; but his mistake creates the model of experience, of a concept that will end up as the concept of the thing itself, not as a poor projection from things.¹

This receptivity inevitably succumbs to the wave of repression that institutes infantile amnesia, for its most primal objects are hedged about with social taboos. Freud provides the basis for this notion, suggesting that children may actually become more stupid at a certain point in their development, when socialisation forces them to tame their sexual curiosity:

It is hardly to be believed what goes on in a child of four or five years old. Children are very active-minded at that age; their early sexual period is also a period of intellectual flowering. I have an impression that with the onset of the latency period they become mentally inhibited as well, stupider.²

Adorno holds out hope that theoretically recovering this erotic childhood receptivity could provide a critical lens through which to examine the adult world. From this perspective certain things come to light, or are at least harder to obscure.

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.373.

²Freud, *The Question of Lay Analysis*, p.315.

Though Freud opens this door, he closes it again with his overly dry focus on sexuality. Inhibited by the explosive nature of the material he was uncovering, Freud's struggle to achieve an unimpeachably scientific clarity ends up affronting the memory of childhood. His quantitative-hydraulic model of instinctual energetics lets the essential quality of childhood experience slip through its grasp. The scientific defence that experience is outside the remit of psychology, which should concentrate on investigating its pre-conditions, does nothing to negate the justifiable feeling that Freud does violence to that experience. Ironically, such feelings about Freud are often displaced into the very protests about sexual impropriety Freud was trying to avoid. Because reality demands the same renunciation of the subtle erotics of childhood that Freud carries out, the disgusted protests of his readers can serve two mental currents at once, like all symptomatic compromise formations. The urge to repress gains satisfaction through the moralistic judgements, but the urge to rescue the erotic is itself registered in the unease prompted by Freud's scientific reductions.

Adorno refines Freud's recognition of the importance of infantile sexuality by conserving its otherness, which is crudely overlaid in Freud's haste to deploy an adult perspective:

His magnificent discovery of infantile sexuality will cease to do violence only when we learn to understand the infinitely subtle and yet utterly sexual impulses of children. In their perceptive world, poles apart from that of the grown ups, a fleeting smell or a gesture take on dimensions that the analyst, faithful to adult criteria, would like to attribute solely to their observations of their parents' coitus.¹

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.90.

Instead of looking to orthodox psychoanalysis to supply the missing dimension, Adorno looks to literary models. Freud often did the same thing himself, sensing the limits of his young science. To justify reference to extra-scientific sources, Freud tells us that

creative writers are valuable allies and their evidence is to be prized highly, for they are apt to know a whole host of things between heaven and earth of which our philosophy has not yet let us dream. In their knowledge of the mind they are far in advance of us everyday people, for they draw upon sources which we have not yet opened up for science.¹

Marcel Proust was one of Adorno's favourite authors. Adorno describes Proust as a great psychologist of the ego. His painful attempt to recall his own life as a process, rather than as the adventures of a rigid subject, 'established the precariousness of all ego-identity.'² Adorno takes this demolition of the fixed subject as a sign that things could be different, as part of his critique of identity-thinking. Proust's undermining of identity through a psychology that reaches the social through its immersion in the phenomenology of individual experience, rather than by trying to get outside it, enacts the constellational dialectic of sociology and psychology Adorno aspires to:

Proust's psychological work attacks psychology itself. [...] The infinitely complex structure of Proust's novel is an attempt to reconstruct, through a totality that includes psychology, personal relationships, and the psychology of intelligible character, or the transformation of images, a reality which no view orientated toward mere

¹S. Freud (1907), *Delusions and Dreams in Jensen's "Gradiva"*, in Freud (1990), *Art and Literature* (PFL 14), pp.27-118, p.34.

²Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.87.

psychological or sociological data for the sake of isolating them can grasp.¹

In its concern for the concept of totality, this advice on how to read Proust draws on the neo-Hegelian aesthetics of modernism that lie behind Adorno's similar advice on looking at autonomous art or listening to good music. But it is no accident that the recommendation is also the same as that which Freud provides when instructing clients on the interpretation of dreams, screen memories and precipitating secondary traumata. According to the method of free association, the possibility of a radical critique of the contents of the mind relies on a disabling of the merely reflex self-criticism born of the client's inner resistance: 'A twofold effort is made, to stimulate his attentiveness in respect of his psychic perceptions, and to eliminate the critical spirit in which he is ordinarily in the habit of viewing such thoughts as come to the surface.'²

The link with Adorno's aesthetics and Proust's artistry becomes more direct when Freud quotes at length from Schiller to illustrate the idea. Schiller advises a friend, who is experiencing a creative block, that his problem lies

in the constraint which your intellect imposes on your imagination. [...] It hinders the creative work of the mind if the intellect examines too closely the ideas already pouring in. [...] Regarded in isolation, an idea may be quite insignificant, and venturesome in the extreme, but it may acquire importance from an idea which follows it; perhaps in a certain collocation with other ideas, which may seem equally absurd, it may be capable of furnishing a very serviceable link. The intellect cannot judge all these ideas

¹T.W. Adorno (1991), 'Short Commentaries on Proust', in Adorno, *Notes to Literature, Volume One*, trans. S.W. Nicholsen, New York: Columbia University Press, pp.174-184, p.177.

²Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*(1932), p.109.

unless it can retain them until it has considered them in connection with these other ideas.¹

Adorno may criticise the kind of medically mechanical free-association that disables the critical faculty only to replace it with the ready-made formulations of the analyst,² but he still draws on the constellational component of the theory of free association when discussing the difficulties of reading Proust: 'Proust should be read with the idea of [...] dwelling on the concrete without grasping prematurely at something that yields itself not directly but only through its thousand facets.'³

Adorno connects this freely associative concept of 'dwelling on the concrete' with the super-charged eyes of the child, a recollection of which can produce in the adult an embarrassed recognition of what they have lost in gaining themselves:⁴

Proust looks at even adult life with such alien and wondering eyes that under his immersed gaze the present is virtually transformed into prehistory, into childhood.⁵

[...]

The sense he emanates of something familiar in the midst of what is most out of the ordinary is due to the unparalleled discipline with which he handles things every individual once knew, in childhood, and then repressed, things that now return to him with the force of the familiar. What seems so extremely individuated in

¹Schiller (letter of Dec. 1st, 1788 to Korner), quoted in Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1932), p.111.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.68-69.

³Adorno, 'Short Commentaries on Proust', p.175.

⁴This theme owes a lot to Walter Benjamin, who was a translator of Proust, as well as being the author of several essays on the experience of children, included in W. Benjamin (1996), *Selected Writings Vol. 1: 1913-1926*, Cambridge MA: Belknap Press.

⁵T.W. Adorno (1954), 'On Proust', in Adorno (1992), *Notes to Literature, Volume Two*, trans. S.W. Nichol森, New York: Columbia University Press, pp.312-317, p.315.

Proust is not inherently individuated; it seems so only because we no longer dare to react in this way, or are no longer capable of doing so. Actually, Proust restores the promise of the universality we were cheated of. In his texts it makes us blush, like the mention of a name carefully kept secret.¹

This account of the uncanny force of Proust's texts is as fine a definition of Freud's concept² as you could find. It develops Freud's particular clinical suggestion that the memory underlying the uncanny be used as a critique of neurotic adult experience, in the more universal direction of using it as marker for a lost promise of better things. Proust's constellation of these childlike yearnings with an incisively reflective rationality is one exemplar of Adorno's aesthetic dialectic of mimesis and constructive rationality.³ As Freud pointed out with free association, one has to disable the critical faculty, reaching a state of 'mimic tranquillity',⁴ but remaining rationally attentive nonetheless. Attention is particularly important for avoiding mechanical interpretation.

Proust's method of 'utopian regression'⁵ deploys a characteristic relation between place, time and memory, which lies behind his use of

¹Adorno, 'On Proust', p.316.

²Freud, 'The Uncanny'.

³T.W. Adorno (1997), *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Hullot-Kentor, London: Athlone, pp.53-60.

⁴Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1932), p.110.

⁵Adorno, 'Short Commentaries on Proust', p.180. Adorno is more well known for his condemnation of regressive cultural phenomena, such as his essay 'On the Fetish character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in Arato and Gebhardt, *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, pp.270-299. But even there, the dual nature of regression is hinted at. Regressive listeners are 'not childlike [...] But they are childish.' (p.286). If the childlike element can be constellated with a disciplined construction, it can become critical. Mahler's music, which appropriates elements of popular marches and the like, is given as an example: 'Such music really crystallizes the whole, into which it has incorporated the vulgarized fragments, into something new, yet it takes its material from regressive listening.' (p.298) I suggest that Adorno sees Proust's regressions in the same way. Whitebook discusses 'The Progressive Uses of Regression' in *Perversion and Utopia*, pp.207-215. He mentions Proust on p.208. His argument is aimed at Gadamer and Habermas, who are nervous of the regressions needed to capture the creative power of phantasy.

recollection to evoke particular modes of experience or relationship (as in Adorno's comments on the child's intense relation with its favourite places, above). According to Freud, objects in the real world often become symbolically charged carriers of subjective memories or phantasies. Similarly, Proust's masterpiece is rich in incredible phenomenological accounts of the relation between subject and object, with material things, sights and smells acting as the repositories of lost memories. 'The past is hidden somewhere outside [...], beyond the reach of intellect, in some material object (in the sensation which that material object will give us) which we do not suspect.'¹

The most famous instance of this, the one introducing Proust's effort to recollect lost time, is the strange feeling of bliss that overwhelms the narrator when he dips a crumb of *petite madeleine* into his tea. His effort to recall the earlier memory of a loved aunt who used to do the same for him, which underpins the uncanny affect, is creatively described as a process of free association, complete with resistance to what rises from the depths of the mind. Freud himself could not have bettered it:

I place in position before my mind's eye the still recent taste of the first mouthful, and I feel something start within me, something that leaves its resting place and attempts to rise, something that has been embedded like an anchor at a great depth; I do not know yet what it is, but I can feel it mounting slowly; I can measure the resistance, I can hear the echo of great spaces traversed.²

Proust's utopian regressions allow an appreciation of the subtly developed psychoanalytic moment of Adorno's work. One important

¹M. Proust (1979), *Remembrance of Things Past, Vol One: Swann's Way Pt.1*, London: Chatto and Windus p.57-58. In *Aesthetic Theory* Adorno says this is rather idealist, because it neglects the primacy of the object, reducing it to a mere receptacle of the memory. But Adorno nevertheless takes Proust's reactions to objects as an archetypal layer of art.

²Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, p.60.

element of this is the role of psychoanalysis as a theory which allows the conceptualisation of an ideal mode of relationship with otherness, extrapolated from the negative distortions which usually beset it. In this particular instance, the otherness of the memory which is reluctant to surface is of prime importance, together with the open attitude needed to recall it. That the memory is a repressed memory of female care is also significant, since Adorno takes sexual difference as the exemplary model for all relations with an alien other.

In Proust's work the imperfections of relationships of primary care reveal the utopian nature of his regression, which becomes an instantiation of Adorno and Horkheimer's definition of sublimation: 'The secret of aesthetic sublimation is its representation of fulfilment as a broken promise.'¹ This negative concept of sublimation is neglected in Whitebook's otherwise comprehensive discussion of Adorno's views on sublimation.² It provides the germ of a refutation of Whitebook's contention that Adorno completely rejects the concept of sublimation on the grounds of its conformist role in adjusting the instincts to meet repressive social demands.³ Whitebook wants sublimation to reconcile nature and culture, but Adorno suggests that at present it can do no better than highlighting the lack of real reconciliation. This highlighting is still a sublimation, but cannot unify what remains split apart. Whitebook's optimism about the reconciling potential of sublimation is perhaps connected, like his related frustration at Adorno's refusal of synthesis, to his therapeutic agenda. His frustration is similar to that which I expressed earlier in connection with Adorno's refusal of the middle ground between normality and perversion.

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.140.

²Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, Chapter Five: 'Sublimation: A Frontier Concept', pp.217-262.

³Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, pp.261-262.

Adorno's concept of sublimation as an aesthetic recollection of the broken promise reminds us that the point of his excursus to the literary canon is not to undialectically counter Freud's rationalist account of childhood with a purely romantic evocation of 'psychological archetypes'.¹ The point is to show how childhood moments can only be retrieved by using a mature conceptual style which still dares to yearn for something beyond itself, without deluding itself that it can get there yet. This non-repressive literary-theoretical refinement of the concept of sublimation is meant to champion the drive it channels. The goal is not aim-inhibition, but a development of the drive towards the utopian moment at the origin of that aim. The *actual* redemption of the potential of these childhood moments of erotic interchange with objects and people has to wait for another reality, and so the price of Proust's refusal to renounce the childhood claim to total happiness is the loss of happiness in the present. 'Proust is a martyr to happiness.'² Today, as always, the promise of childhood is broken - and the promise stalks happiness as an uncanny spectre. Refusal to renounce the demands of that ghost can only manifest itself as a perverse or neurotic scar on the individuals who cannot bear to fully adjust themselves. Proust's narrator struggles to secure an identity by identification with various parties in the shifting social alliances that dominate the novel, but his fragile desire for happiness ill-equips him for the savage world of upper-class snobbery.

In order to further illustrate the significance to Adorno of Proust's method of utopian regression, I next select a model of such a procedure drawn from Adorno's *Minima Moralia* (subtitled 'Reflections from Damaged Life'), and use a fragment of Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past* to clarify Adorno's enrichment of Freudian ideas.

¹Adorno, 'Short Commentaries on Proust', p.178.

²Adorno, 'On Proust', p.317.

Adorno included in *Minima Moralia* an autobiographical fragment entitled '*Heliotrope*.'¹ This fragment makes clear the contribution infantile erotism makes to the attempt to judge just what real pleasure in a relation with the alien might be. Childhood bliss at the energising of the once-familiar by the presence of the new is the primal source of Adorno's notion of a transformation in our relations with otherness. *Heliotrope* dives into the heart of this notion through Adorno's recollection of a visit made to his childhood home by an exotic lady visitor. The title (loosely, 'sun-seeker'; both a general plant tropism and a genus of flower) makes it beautifully clear that the subject of the fragment is the life drive, Eros. Understood psychologically, Adorno's theoretical memoir encapsulates several Oedipal dynamics. Artistically, Proust is Adorno's tutor.

Baldly stated, the process at the heart of the fragment is a boy's rediscovery of the dashed utopia of unrestricted contact with his mother, through his first extra-familial love object - the lady visitor. With the regaining of the possibility of complete love, kindled by the indulgent attention the visitor bestows, the boy remembers what true pleasure was. The visitor re-awakes the erotism Oedipally repressed in the home, and with it the keen perceptive intelligence whose first model was sexual curiosity. The resurrection of the intensity of the boy's sense of smell by the woman's perfume is a testament to this re-awakening of the erotic sensibility. In Freud, the human capacity for the repression of sexuality is founded in the atrophy of the sense of smell which began when our quadruped ancestors stood up:

Freud expressed the facts of the matter with genius when he said that loathing [of the body] first arose when men began to walk upright and were at a distance from the ground, so that the sense of smell which drew the male

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp.177-178.

animal to the female in heat was relegated to a secondary position among the senses.¹

None of this is imprisoned by Adorno in dead psychoanalytic jargon; rather, it is expressed artistically, through a utopian regression. It is the lyricism of Adorno's prose that generates its uncanny affect, as Adorno attempts to prompt in his reader a recollection of his/her own memories-of-memories and the echo of bliss so easily lost in the bustle of civilised adult life. Tempting though it is to reproduce the whole piece (it is only a page of text), a couple of selections will suffice:

When a guest comes to stay with his parents, a child's heart beats with more fervent expectation than it ever did before Christmas. It is not presents that are the cause, but transformed existence. The perfume that the lady visitor puts down on the chest of drawers while he is allowed to watch her unpacking, has a scent that resembles memory even though he breathes it for the first time.²

[...]

The yearning to plunge into unformed joy, into the pool of salamanders and storks that the child has learned painfully to subdue and block with the frightful image of the black man, the demon who wants to take him away - here he finds it again, without fear.³

Having identified the repetition of desire for the mother and fear of the father alluded to in the fairy-tale symbolism of the last passage, it would be possible to psychoanalyse it to death. But this would be to kill that which Adorno is trying to keep alive by using Proust's conception of infantile erotics, instead of Freud's. The latent material can be more sensitively brought out by reference to Proust's novel than by reference to

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.233.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.177.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.178.

Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, showing that when trying to communicate the central importance of early experience, understated style may be more important than explicit scientific content. Proust's narrator recalls the bottomless depth of his desire to remain with his mother overnight, and the concomitant depth of his partly projective fear of the father who threatens the childish wish:

But I begged her again to 'come and say good night to me!' terrified as I saw the light from my father's candle already creeping up the wall, but also making use of his approach as a means of blackmail, in the hope that my mother, not wishing him to find me there, as find me he must if she continued to hold out, would give in to me, and say: 'Go back to your room. I will come.'

Too late: my father was upon us. Instinctively I murmured, though no one heard me, 'I am done for!'¹

In fact the fear is unrealised, and the boy is indulged. His mother stays up with him reading out loud from a novel, and sleeps in his room. This paradise is marred by the way his mother symbolically introduces a mystery to the heart of sex by editing out the love scenes as she reads, and by the boy's knowledge that in forcing her to give in to his demands he has somehow betrayed her hopes for him. That night is also the first night that his parents classify him as a nervous case, rather than blaming him for his unhappiness. He also knows that the intimacy of the undisturbed hours alone with his mother are an exception, since paternal jealousy may regard as promiscuity the mother's desire to share her affections with the children:

I knew that such a night could not be repeated; that the strongest desire I had in the world, namely, to keep my

¹Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, p.46. This could be transcribed into Lacanian terms, as a recollection of the intrusion of the symbolic realm of the phallic law (the father's candle...) into the world of the infantile imaginary (thwarted union of boy and mother...).

mother in my room through the sad hours of darkness,
ran too much counter to general requirements and to the
wishes of others.¹

Adorno's *Heliotrope* shows how such infantile desires persist, and how fleeting memories of them can be re-cathected. The lady visitor treats the boy as his parents cannot, and that she exists keeps alive the hope of a love free of the feeling one's father is coming up the stairs, or that one's mother is standing in the shadows. To extend Adorno's reference to the importance of the olfactory, we could say that with the visitor, for the first time the scent of woman is not marked with the smell of his father's cigar. The visitor does not sleep with him, but her presence enlivens the stale routine, providing a psychological hint of true satisfaction. 'With the order of the day - perhaps tomorrow he will be allowed to miss school - the boundaries between the generations too are suspended, and he who at eleven o'clock has still not been sent to bed has an inkling of true promiscuity.'²

Like Proust's utopian memory, this one too has the status of being an exception, but such exceptions become the model of reciprocal exchange whose potential in the intimacy of parent-child relations may be distorted by the rule of the father, just as in later life the chance of a free society is lost as the laws of paternalistic capitalism reify the possibility of rational exchange:

From the joy of greatest proximity she removes the curse
by wedding it to absolute distance. For this the child's
whole being is waiting, and so too, later, must he be able
to wait who does not forget what is best in childhood.³

¹Proust, *Remembrance of Things Past*, p.55-56.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.178.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.178.

The boy's passion for the exotically distant woman who at last takes him seriously, who evokes the repressed early yearning for an unattainable maternal proximity, can be shown to be a prototype for the theoretical drive of *Negative Dialectics*, written some twenty years after *Minima Moralia*. In the later book, Adorno speculates on what a differentiated (rather than immediate) reconciliation between subject and object could be:

The reconciled condition would not be the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different, beyond the heterogeneous and beyond that which is one's own.¹

So, this mature philosopheme of Adorno's universalises the theoretical dialectic of proximity and distance first worked out through a Proustian-psychoanalytic recollection in *Minima Moralia*. This clarifies Adorno's remark that 'the truly humane develops out of the most powerful experience of difference, that of the sexes.'² Following this chain of associations, it seems reasonable to assert that *Negative Dialectics* yearns for what we might psychoanalytically interpret as an anacletic theoretical relationship with objects. According to Freud, anacletic love is founded in the erotic idealisation of the parent who satisfies the child's self-preservation drives,³ in opposition to the narcissistic type of object choice based on a projection outwards of an image of the self.

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.191.

²Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two,' p.96.

³S. Freud (1914), 'On Narcissism: an Introduction', in Freud (1991), *On Metapsychology* (PFL 11), pp.59-98, p.84. In identifying an anacletic dimension to Adorno's utopia, I find my self in opposition to Alford's contention that Adorno's utopian constellation of distance and proximity is 'an almost pure expression of the narcissistic ideal' (Alford, 'Nature and Narcissism', p.187). Pure narcissism completely collapses the distance in proximity, and Adorno instead wants to reflectively retain a sense of protected otherness.

Adorno's anacritic theory tries to resist the philosophical narcissism which annexes the alien characteristics of the other by modelling them on the self. This conforms to Adorno's psychoanalytic orthodoxy, which persists behind his critique of Freud. Despite the abstraction of the philosophising in *Negative Dialectics*, its link with Freudian theories of sexuality remains clear - but only if read through the earlier formulation in *Minima Moralia*. Once detected, this Freudian component of the conceptual utopia which glimmers behind the negativity of Adorno's dialectic can be used to counter Seyla Benhabib's Habermasian charge that Adorno's only norm is an aesthetic theory offering scant basis for a critical theory of society: '*Negative Dialectics* shows how this search for otherness, for a non-identitary logic, leads to the aesthetic realm. This turn to the aesthetic, however, can hardly secure the basis of a critical analysis of society.'¹

Benhabib quotes Adorno's passage on philosophical imperialism and the ideal of a reconciliation with otherness. But surprisingly, given Benhabib's awareness of the psychoanalytic component of Adorno's work, she does not talk of the fragmentary psychoanalytic norm operating under the surface of Adorno's formulation, preferring to portray Adorno's utopia as one born out of nothing but aesthetic experience. My discussion of Adorno's reading of Proust shows, I hope, that for Adorno, the aesthetic is important as a psychoanalytic reminder of lost potentials that really existed in childhood, at least in a fragmented form. Interestingly, Benhabib quotes Habermas's response to Adorno's formulation on proximity and distance. The sense of the uncanny invoked in Adorno's reading of Proust is used by Habermas to explicate Adorno. But Benhabib's selection from Habermas does not discuss the particular contribution of psychoanalysis to the theory of the uncanny - the discovery of its source in repressed

¹Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia*, p.222.

recollections of childhood. Of Adorno's assertion that reconciliation is found through a proximity in which otherness is allowed to remain distant, Habermas says this:

Whoever meditates on this assertion will become aware that the condition described, although never real, is still most intimate and familiar to us. It has the structure of a life together in communication that is free from coercion.¹

The Proustian-psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's critical theory reveals the infantile and bodily roots of the uncanny feeling of undistorted communication with otherness, something the linguistic turn in Habermas and Benhabib abstracts from too much. The condition described may have been true once, and so could be again. At the very least the yearning for it was. This is why its evocation is uncanny. On this reading of Adorno's formulation, the normative basis for social critique which Benhabib requires could be provided by the questions and answers prompted by Proust's utopian regressions and Adorno's *Heliotrope*. In becoming sublimations, artistic portrayals of broken promises and exceptional moments, those regressions explain why it takes so much to open us to the lost memory of a cognitive utopia. And the question they raise, as to why adults still have to wait for the redemption of what was best in childhood, invites a political answer despite being prompted by aesthetic reflection.

In the final section of this chapter, I attempt a few abstractions of my own, moving from this particular immersion in the psychology of childhood towards a more general consideration of the role of psychoanalytic ideas in Adorno's negative dialectics.

¹Habermas, in Benhabib, *Critique, Norm and Utopia*, p.223.

VI: Psychoanalysis as Negative Knowledge.

I have explicated Adorno's direct use of psychoanalysis in his theory of authoritarian irrationalism, his immanent critique of Freud, and the way he seeks to push psychoanalysis beyond itself using Proust's utopian regressions. I want to end this chapter by examining the deeper role of psychoanalysis within the orbit of Adorno's conception of critical theory's own need for self-reflection. A problem here is that Adorno's philosophical uses of psychoanalytic theories are fragmentary, and are so much a part of the background, that they are often passed over. In this section, I concentrate on trying to make explicit the kind of psychoanalytic influences on critical theory that Adorno only reveals in a subtle and understated, if not downright cryptic, manner. This of necessity involves a degree of abstraction Adorno would have deplored. But Adorno's unique approach is best left to him, and those trying to understand it cannot avoid provisionally crystallising out positive conceptions from his fluid mixture of negative juxtapositions.

Adorno's critical theory adopts above all Hegel's phenomenological ideal of surrendering self-consciously to the immanent movement of the matter at hand. This is stylistically enacted by Adorno through essayistic theoretical fragments which stand as a critique of Hegel's mania for systematic proliferation, which ends up obscuring its object. Adorno tries to critically refigure the discredited image of the 'man of letters,' arguing that in an age of specialists without spirit, inter-disciplinary research provides a corrective to the academic terrorism that polices the boundaries between ossifying disciplines: 'The departmentalisation of mind is a means of abolishing mind.'¹

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.21.

The point here is that the method of psychoanalysis is one model for this constellational approach to knowledge, not only an element of it. Every theoretical element of Adorno's inter-disciplinary critical theory contributes something essential to the form as well as to the content of his 'anti-system,'¹ which eschews all foundational concepts:

from my theorem that there is no philosophical first principle, it now also results that one cannot build an argumentative structure that follows the usual progressive succession of steps, but rather that one must assemble the whole out of a series of partial complexes that are, so to speak, of equal weight and concentrically arranged all on the same level; their constellation, not their succession, must yield the idea.²

Adorno draws the concept of the constellation from the work of Walter Benjamin, which had its direct fore-runner in the Jewish tradition of textual commentary (see Chapter Two, where I provide more detail on Adorno's use of Benjamin's messianic theory). This tradition sets out different interpretations of a text in a ring around the object of inquiry. Taken together, the pattern of these interpretations provides a conceptual equivalent of the non-existent, but traditional, figures our minds flesh out around stars in the night sky. The British look at the northern sky and see a plough, but others see a big dipper, or an animal. When tradition regards itself, it sees only the shapes it is accustomed to. The critical theoretical act of re-organising the customary constellation into a new force field attempts to draw the fragments into a new and illuminating formation showing how the original division of the moments, which are held in a congealed and coercive relationship, is a distorted echo of a potential togetherness through diversity, which is Adorno's utopia. It is possible to

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.xx.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.364.

trace histories in the night sky of our conceptual inheritance other than those identified by tradition.

But this cannot proceed as a purely utopian re-arrangement of recalcitrant material. The new constellation can actually do little more than clearly expose the distorting influence holding the pattern in its traditional format. The aim of Adorno's dialectical approach to competing realms of validity, for example the social and the psychological, is therefore to mediate each extreme through the other, avoiding a theoretical reduction of either - *unless* particular historically and materially specific conditions force theory to reflect honestly the real dominance of certain patterns. The predominance of the social in Adorno's work is to be understood as an imposition, as the result of a certain historical situation, which acts as a stumbling block for the theory that yearns to abolish hierarchy. This explains why Adorno finds himself drawn back to the universal order through the inner logic of each fragment of the constellation, in the same way that Freud finds himself drawn into universal patterns by apparently disparate psychical phenomena. These universals should never be imposed on the diverse, but only traced through an immersion in that diversity.

One exemplar of this theoretical method is the way Freud arrives at a conception of the relation between intra-psychic struggle and the development of civilisation. Freud's insights, invaluable for critical theory, came not despite his focus on the individual subject, but *through* his obsessively scrupulous attention to the strange details of life and his refusal to simply over-lay what they taught him with easier or more politically edifying mystifications. His insights into the great problematic of the relation between culture and nature accordingly arrive through following the tortuous inner history of the individual subject, and relating it proto-dialectically to anthropological and sociological data, not through

subordinating the former to the latter. In this way Freud is inevitably led from the repetitive patterns of individual mental life towards an analysis of the organisation of social life.

The obvious repeating pattern would be the Oedipus complex, which Freud is always keen to present as a distasteful datum forced on him by reality, rather than as a phantasy of his own (which of course it also was). In Adorno, the dominance of social conditions over the individual has an equivalent character (it pops up, like the Oedipus complex, at the end of every chain of association) - and, like Freud, he asks us to blame reality for this, not him. Adorno uses Freud's appropriation of Haeckel's biological speculations on the relation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis to allude to complex connections between the violence of each infant's subjection to the reality principle and the traumatic movement of world history: 'the social principle of domination coincides with the psychological one of the repression of instincts both ontogenetically and phylogenetically.'¹ In this, Adorno is drawing on the well known work of Horkheimer concerning the relation between economic instability and developmentally crippling authoritarian patterns of child-rearing.² On this account, it is getting harder for parents to cushion the blow to childhood hopes which an irrational social totality passes off as normal maturation. It is still possible to hear today the well-worn justifications that have been used for decades by work-worn parents to counter utopian infantile protests against unfairness: "It's an unfair world, and the sooner you get used to it the better, little madam..."

Fredric Jameson is therefore correct to emphasise Adorno's use of psychoanalysis to show how the negative predominance of the social totality determines the psychological fate of the individual, taking

¹Adorno, quoted in Cook, 'The Sundered Totality', p.209.

²Horkheimer, 'Authority and The Family'.

'repression and the damaged subject as indices and results of the exchange process and the dynamics of capitalism.'¹ But Jameson does not draw proper attention to the fact that both Adorno's theoretical ideal of the reciprocal constellation, and its meticulously recorded failure due to a historically given block, owe a considerable debt to the aims of psychoanalysis and the identically determined failure of those aims.

That it is actually possible to briefly set out the inner movement of Adorno's method using psychoanalytic theory confirms that the importance of Freud for Adorno is not confined to those occasions when Adorno is overtly discussing psychological matters, even if Adorno characteristically eschews a positive statement of this. On my reading, one model for the production of a theoretical constellation resistant to traditional interpretations of our conceptual inheritance is the psychoanalytic reconstruction of the complex which dominates the analysand's history through a set of screen-memories based on certain family mythologies. Each partial complex of the psychological case study must be kept in view to negatively map out the overdetermined pathological pattern, which can hardly ever be positively apprehended.

Moreover, the possibility of producing new arrangements of the life narrative during therapy is oriented as a far-reaching critique of identity, founded on the attempt to recollect a repressed history of the subject, which is also Adorno's central philosophical project. Adorno's critique of identity is the mature form of ideological analysis, taken as 'a critique of the constitutive consciousness itself.'² The words Adorno uses to characterise this critique of the subject apply equally well to the goal of psychoanalysis: 'The subject is to see reason against its reason.'³ Freud's theory of the mind exposes the unpalatable fact that consciousness is as

¹Jameson, *Late Marxism*, p.26.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.148.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.148.

often as not based on repressive forms of organisation, ultimately revealed as forms of culture and society, which split off one part of the mind from another. The moments of the psychic concatenation, which could potentially become aware of each other, fail to do so, or at least do so only in distorted ways. Each fragment of the mind develops according to its own laws, some of which simply cannot operate in the others. Where a repressive mental hierarchy has evolved, subjective reason is a veil repression has drawn over that evolution. In this situation, the specific logic of each marginal psychic element must not be subsumed under an account which wishes away the division for the sake of a unified theory.

This respect for marginalia is a vital moment of Freud's mode of analysis. A study of even insignificant mental events will by this logic automatically connect with everything else - everything else (such as the influence of society) does not have to be dragged in afterwards, as Adorno accuses the Freudian revisionists of doing. Freud insists that 'everything is related to everything, including small things to great' in what he refers to as, using a phrase that recalls Hegel, 'the universal concatenation of events.'¹ This rigorous determinism becomes in Freud a certainty that a proper examination of the dregs of everyday life, which Hegel in the end disdains, can yield momentous revelations capable of disturbing the facade of screen-memories. Reflection quickly reveals that the concatenation of seemingly random psychic marginalia is not a diffuse *melange*; rather, there is an order to things that can be negatively traced through these psychical distortions. Psychoanalysis 'is accustomed to divine secret and concealed things from despised or un-noticed features, from the rubbish heap, as it were, of our observations.'²

¹S. Freud, (1916), 'Parapraxes', in Freud (1991), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (PFL 1) Lecture 2, pp.50-65, p.53.

²S Freud, (1914), 'The Moses of Michelangelo', in Freud (1990), *Art and Literature* (PFL 14), pp.249-282, p.265. My Chapter Two examines Adorno's direct application of this quote to Kafka.

Freud here offers us a method attuned to the demands Adorno makes of dialectical theory through his critique of Hegel's system. Adorno sets out his stall in *Minima Moralia* by trying to produce concrete philosophemes from the detritus of his everyday experience as an intellectual refugee. He seeks to justify the subjectively aphoristic form of this project against Hegel, by appealing to Hegel's own demands:

In his relation to the subject Hegel does not respect the demand that he otherwise passionately upholds: to be in the matter and not 'always beyond it', to 'penetrate into the immanent content of the matter'. If today the subject is vanishing, aphorisms take upon themselves the duty 'to consider the evanescent itself as essential.'¹

At its best, Freudian theory operates according to this respect for the evanescent. Freud's classical method tries to follow even vanishing chains of associations without imposing a meaning on them before they have the chance to tell their own story. This procedure must be carried out afresh for each analysis, even if the analyst is sure he knows what is coming. His certainty is often confounded, if he can remain astute enough to catch himself in the act of reformulating it to fit the unique particularities of the case in hand. Trying to achieve a reconciliation between the fragments of the mind before they have become aware of each other, through a didactic presentation of the analyst's suspicions, does not work. For insight to be achieved, it must be actualised in each specific instance, not simply played out in advance. This psychoanalytic realisation that distortion is a form of negative knowledge of the truth obviously echoes Hegel's famous critique of the simple dichotomy of 'true' and 'false' (which is the section of Hegel's *Phenomenology* Adorno quotes from, above):

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.16.

truth therefore includes the negative also, what would be called the false, if it could be regarded as something from which one might abstract. The evanescent itself must, on the contrary, be regarded as essential, not as something fixed, cut off from the True, and left who knows where outside it, any more than the True is to be regarded as something on the other side, positive and dead.¹

In Adorno's hands, psychoanalysis becomes a model of his negatively Hegelian method of carrying out ideology critique. In psychoanalysis, concentration on the concentric ripples of distortion produced by the complex is the key to speculatively reconstructing it, even though the distortions are "false." Moreover, for the deepest conflicts, the distortions are all that ever normally betrays them. It becomes clear that the critique of identity has to proceed by examining the material (dreams, slips, elisions, associations) which escapes from the neat facade of the analysand's customary identity, and which betray hidden possibilities. This psychoanalytic theory influences Adorno's concern with the theoretical and psychosocial fragments, margins and blind spots neglected by mainstream philosophy. In Chapter Two I show how these ideas develop explicitly in Adorno's reading of Kafka's literary constellations.

The real point of dwelling on these discrete moments of the constellational analysis, rather than trying to account for the whole concatenation with one unified theory in advance, is that for Adorno's critical theory, as for Freud's theory of the mind, the fragments simply don't add up to a harmonious totality. Freud's work is therefore at its strongest when it eschews easy unity in the pursuit of truth, and weakest when it forces disparate material to submit too soon to a rigidified schema. A good example of this problem is Freud's willingness to transpose clinical data willy-nilly into grandiose historical generalisations: 'Such

¹Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p.27.

ideas as the crudely literal conception of the Moses legend have served to buttress the resistances of the official sciences that have no trouble in disproving them.¹

Theory must not seek to completely tidy up the chaotic state of affairs that confronts it, because the result is inevitably the proliferation of huge systems whose only harmony is ultimately provided by either the wish for a positive unity, or the denial of an existing bad totality. This totality is the distorting presence which causes the wish by maintaining the fragmented life which provokes it. In Freud, that distorting influence is ultimately traced to the repressive impact of civilisation on children, but as I have suggested with reference to Adorno's reading of Proust, this insight is frozen by Freud's truncated theoretical and political horizon.

In my next chapter, I make concrete the rather abstract account of the Freudian moment of Adorno's philosophy provided in this section, using the framework developed here to examine in detail the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's reading of Kafka. Chapter Two also biographically and theoretically contextualises Adorno's readings of Freud and Kafka, by drawing attention to the importance of certain messianic and modernist themes in the work of all three writers.

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.80.

CHAPTER TWO

ADORNO'S QUASI-MESSIANIC FREUDO-MARXIST READING OF KAFKA.

Introduction.

Each of the psychoanalytic themes examined in Chapter One could be found, at least in germ form, in most of Adorno's essays; but not as simply a mechanical re-application of psychoanalytical concepts to a range of topics. Adorno's deployment of psychoanalysis is a two-way affair. Characteristically, when he uses analytic tropes to interrogate the subject of his criticism, that subject is used to interrogate and develop psychoanalysis. Adorno prefers the concept of the model to that of the example, and thus my attempt to extract an abstracted version of his Freudianism from his writing (Section VI, Chapter One) runs the risk of losing the concrete material which articulates, supports and criticises it. Given Adorno's consistently essayistic style of presentation, with its attempt to reach universality only through immersion in the particular, this is a potentially serious problem.

In this chapter I reverse this emphasis and correct any impression that Adorno's Freudo-Marxism is reducible to an abstract list of theoretical propositions, by providing a detailed examination of one essay: 'Notes on Kafka.'¹ My aim is more to explicate Adorno's psychoanalysis than to make an up-to-date contribution to Kafka studies.

In Adorno's essay, psychoanalytic themes are particularly important, since Kafka himself engaged with the theories of Freud. I use

¹T.W. Adorno (1955), 'Notes on Kafka', in Adorno (1992), *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, Massachusetts: MIT Press, pp.243-271.

Adorno's reading of Kafka to develop my account of the role of psychoanalysis in critical theory, illustrating Kafka's concern with psychological detritus, childlike perspectives on the world, negative criticisms of identity, psychological defence mechanisms, and the dialectical history of religion and modernity. Once these themes have been properly brought to light and developed using Adorno's encounter with a Freud mediated through Kafka's religiously charged prose, it becomes impossible to neglect the universal contribution they make to Adorno's philosophy, even when they remain implicit. Just as Adorno takes Kafka's work as a case study in psychosocial pathology, I am taking Adorno's highly compressed essay on Kafka as a model of the psychological dimension of Adorno's negative method. Willi Goetschel suggests that for Adorno, 'Kafka may be viewed as the poetic idea of negative dialectics.'¹

Important elements of Adorno's account of that poetic idea support my emphasis on psychoanalysis, but properly substantiating my view that Adorno's theory can be labelled a "quasi-messianic Freudo-Marxism," requires various biographical, literary and theoretical excursions to supplement and contextualise my attempt to unpack the psychoanalytic elements of Adorno's 'Notes on Kafka.' Adorno constantly alludes to a variety of theories without further explication or references, and extrapolating to fill in some of this background is essential. For example, Adorno does mention Walter Benjamin in the essay, but Benjamin's theory actually saturates the whole piece, necessitating an engagement with the religious tradition so important to both theorists. The question of Adorno's personal psychological makeup also becomes important at certain stages of my contextualisation of his theory. Although the use of biographical information is problematised by the paucity of primary

¹W. Goetschel (1985), 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', in *Journal of the Kafka Society of America*, Vol. 9, Pt. 1-2, pp.83-106, p.84.

materials available in English, this is no reason for failing to draw insights where possible, especially since the autobiographical moment of Adorno's translated theory is quite illuminating on its own account and when supplemented by Wiggershaus's biographical efforts.

According to Adorno's Freudo-Marxist reading, Kafka's work explores the imposition of patterns of servile and fatalistic dependency which manipulate the instincts of self-preservation, sexuality and destruction through the ego's drive to adaptation. This adaptation ultimately compromises the ego's functioning, leading it to adopt brittle defences which leave it crumbling. Adorno's interpretation of Kafka relates these psychological themes to theological motifs in order to uncover a critique of our hellish society. Kafka's work is taken as being, among other things, a form of literary psychoanalysis outlining a viewpoint from which to diagnose the petrification and fragmentation of the fallen modern subject.

Freud's dethroning of consciousness provides the germ of this insight, but it takes Kafka's exaggerated decentring of the ego and his almost psychotic expansion of mythic taboo to bring out the real truth of psychoanalysis. Kafka's unshrinking examination of the fragile 'I' demonstrates a Freudian concern with the margins of experience, but goes beyond Freud in taking the subject itself to be a waste product of the opaque social systems which determine it.

Kafka's revelations involve a dangerous literary regression behind our adaptation to reality - dangerous, because it turns out that when we open ourselves to our death instincts, the telos of insanity pulls towards a total dissolution of the hard-won renunciations of the ego. Where Proust's method is utopian regression, Kafka's centres on the production of a regressive dystopia. Accordingly, I use interpretations of Kafka's preoccupation with dreams, madness, death-wishes and alienated

sexuality to further explicate Adorno's theoretical sublimation of the energy tied up in perverse impulses. Kafka retains the alterity of this subject matter, yet, like Proust, somehow manages to put it into words. Adorno pays very serious attention to these refined literary accounts of the erotic and destructive drives which struggle with each other through urges of mastery and reconciliation, identification and disavowal, sympathy and sadism. A detailed examination of "Adorno's Kafka" will here serve to flesh out the dark side of these important themes. If Proust illuminates the distortions of an Eros wedded to destructive snobbery, Kafka's vision of hell on Earth tries to put an instinct for death into the service of life.

In Section I of this chapter, 'Literary Psychoanalysis: Dark Literature as a Case Study on the Spiritual Situation of the Age', I explicate Adorno's use of extreme artistic expressions as exemplary objects for the analysis of the psychosocial deformations of modernity. Adorno's examination of writers such as de Sade and Kafka throws light on his Freudian confidence that excessive expressions, whether subjective or cultural, reveal more about personality and culture than their more controlled products. This dark literature can be understood using the psychoanalytic conception of the ego-alien, drawn from *The Authoritarian Personality*. Adorno uses the routine horrors of Kafka's prose to turn certain dark impulses of childhood into a unique psychological perspective on the no-man's land between life and death which characterises concentration camps. Adorno also draws on his own childhood to learn about sympathy and sadism, producing a useful model for Adorno's dialectical tactic of pushing concepts to their limits through self-analysis.

In Section II, 'Exaggerating Psychoanalysis', an exploration of Freud's most speculative works, on primal history and Judaism, serves

both as a development of the theme of religious identity which links the work of Freud, Kafka and Adorno, and as a discussion of Adorno's desire to extract a critical potential from Freud's strangest ideas. I evaluate Kafka's role as the writer who confirms Adorno's aphorism: 'In psychoanalysis nothing is true except the exaggerations.'¹ Adorno prefers Kafka's literary over-exaggerations to Freud's over-literal interpretations of our religious prehistory.

In Section III, 'Through the Eyes of an Artificial Angel: Secular Theology in Adorno's Freudo-Marxism', I clarify further the basis of Adorno's theoretical engagement with certain religious themes. I discuss Adorno's reluctant but then forthright Jewish identity and the Frankfurt School notion that a secularised appropriation of theological metaphysics could carry a certain critical force. I focus on Adorno's adoption of Benjamin's messianically Marxist notion of a dialectical illumination. I illustrate Adorno's strange figure of the artificial angel by discussing the relation of a drawing by Klee to certain images from Kafka, which together disenchant the idea of a spiritual being capable of perceiving the disastrous totality of human affairs. Kafka's work allows us to wear, for a moment, a secularised version of this messianic eyepiece. In order to reconnect with my psychoanalytic theme I introduce, with some reference to the work of George Steiner, the connection between Kafka's parabolically Jewish perspective and the method of psychoanalysis.

In Section IV, 'Messianic Psychoanalysis', I develop this connection, discussing Kafka's surrealistic use of various psychoanalytic tropes and Adorno's application of Freud's theory of *parapraxes* to Kafka's prose. Adorno's analysis leads me into his consideration of the sexual politics implicit in Kafka's writing, and into a discussion of the relative merits of theological and psychosocial approaches to the sexual themes in Kafka.

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.49.

Adorno conserves the messianic promise of a different life through the identification of the shattered fragments of an erotic utopia in Kafka's work.

In Section V, 'Kafka's Negative Montage of Psychosocial Waste', I develop the Freudian dimension of Adorno's aesthetics. Adorno suggests that Kafka's writing functions as a negative photo-montage of the marginal dregs of human psychology, such as dreams and symptoms. Adorno relates this idea to the modernist art which revolves around the re-appropriation of waste and other found objects. Adorno's use of elements of Freud's theory of dreams, which shows how repressive daytime reason tries to discard crucial details of our night-life, leads through some obscure moments of *The Trial* back into Adorno's themes of sexual and social domination.

In Section VI, 'Kafka's Schizoid Self-Dissection as Social Critique', I unpack Adorno's oblique reference to a Freudo-Marxist reading of the father-son dynamics in *The Metamorphosis*, a reading which could connect personal psychopathology to the social systems which exacerbate it. By opening up his subjectivity for inspection, Kafka provides an analogous perspective on the world which conditioned it. Kafka's writing can now be understood as a highly sublimated conversion of the logic of psychological defence mechanisms into an illuminating literary expression, not as the products of madness.

In Section VII, 'Limits of Adorno's Quasi-Messianic Freudo-Marxism', I cautiously venture into further psychobiographical and historical considerations in order to suggest that Adorno's own work attempts a similar feat. But his attempt to combine a devotion to artistic autonomy with Freudian self-analysis and the demands of social theory, can be read against the grain to reveal aspects of a problematic "Messiah complex" in Adorno's work. This complex encourages Adorno's adoption

of a lofty and condescending stance towards the oppressed to whom he dedicates his theoretical efforts. I use certain moments of Adorno's essay on Kafka to illustrate the contradictions which dogged Adorno's relationship with the rebellious students of the sixties, and which allowed certain self-deceptions to slip into his often forthright self-analysis.

These problems are compounded by Adorno's theoretical commitment to Freud's therapeutic coldness, a concept which also owes something to Nietzsche. This coldness emerges in Adorno's reading of Kafka, which is in certain ways symptomatic of Adorno's parasitic approach to the questions of class consciousness and women's oppression, which simply become buttresses for Adorno's refusal to move beyond negative philosophy. This means-end rationality also extends to Adorno's Freudian treatment of Kafka. Just as Freud sometimes carelessly allowed his case studies to become mere examples of theories already established, Adorno's brilliant appropriation of certain latent themes from Kafka's work is in places casually selective.

I: Literary Psychoanalysis: Dark Literature as a Case Study on the Spiritual Situation of the Age.

Engaging with figures in modern literature whose goal is the shattering of common sense and the conscious liberation of the distorted expressions of madness, is for Adorno an essential route into understanding the psychology of modernity. This engagement with the dark side of modern literature cannot proceed solely through condemnation, because this simply exacerbates the ego-alien nature of the horrible impulses it portrays. The ego's claim that anything nasty is nothing to do with it is often the precursor of horrific acts. According to psychoanalysis, true control over dark impulses is only achieved by recognising them as one's own, not by denial or disavowal.

The notion that prejudiced individuals render their more unpleasant impulses and needs ego-alien in order to then project them onto out-groups, plays a central role in *The Authoritarian Personality*, the famous Frankfurt School study of the potentially fascist personality.¹ Self-criticism may be effectively displaced in this manner ("I am not bad and deserving of punishment, he is"²), allowing conventionally moralistic people to retain their positive self-concept even as they take part in violent acts:

Once the individual has convinced himself that there are people who ought to be punished, he is provided with a channel through which his deepest aggressive impulses may be expressed, even while he thinks of himself as thoroughly moral.³

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.55.

²Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.162.

³Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.162.

It is helpful to see Adorno's critical theory as treating the repressive side of the enlightened reason of modernity in an analogous manner - as a form of self-deception complicit with the things it condemns. Dark literature sheds an uncomfortable light on this:

Unlike its apologists, the black writers of the bourgeoisie have not tried to ward off the consequences of the Enlightenment by harmonising theories. They have not postulated that formalistic reason is more closely allied to morality than immorality. Whereas the optimistic writers merely disavowed and denied in order to protect the indissoluble union of reason and crime, civil society and domination, the dark chroniclers mercilessly declared the shocking truth.¹

Reason seeks to externalise its darker side, attacking alleged irrationalists such as de Sade, Nietzsche and Kafka, without comprehending the internal link between their cultural productions and reason itself. The way Kafka's protagonist, K., struggles to admit to himself that he is no better than the manipulative people he encounters (Kafka's version of the acceptance of original sin), is taken by Adorno as a literary-theological precursor of psychoanalytic theory: 'The lesser motives, conclusively demonstrated to the surveyor by the landlady and then also Frieda, are alien to him - Kafka brilliantly anticipated the concept of the Ego-alien later developed by psychoanalysis. But the surveyor admits these motives.'²

The link with psychoanalysis is no accident - Kafka was not only directly influenced by Freud's work, but Freud himself writes in the same tradition of dark literature, escaping the usual confines of scientific discourse: 'Freud's psychoanalysis, which [...] Horkheimer and Adorno had to thank for many of their most fruitful ideas, continued the tradition

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.117-118.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.255.

of the psychologically or anthropologically oriented "dark" novelists of the bourgeois epoch.¹ These dark writers of modernity confront the spirit of the modern age with what it has rendered ego-alien. Adorno carries through a critical extrapolation from the terrible texts which reveal psychological truths few are brave enough to recognise as their own, to the reason which bolsters that refusal and blocks the path towards a proper self-reflection.

The exemplary exegesis of this interpretative framework is Adorno and Horkheimer's chapter on the Marquis de Sade in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.² There, Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that de Sade's critique of the Enlightenment works in its service by being an instantiation of its worst elements (which, we could add, remain ego-alien for reason itself). This reveals the psychosexual apogee of unreflectively enlightened reason, a distorted erotic relation between people who are reduced to instrumentalised objects of collective pleasure. This is the immanent truth of de Sade's sexual-gymnastic torture pyramids.³

The pursuit of pleasure has lost its substantive link with the social development of the good life, and become a mechanised pursuit of personal gratification. This logic of sexual domination also characterises the loss of a capacity for the sensuous enjoyment of nature. The methodical exploitation of the Sadean victim is a ghastly presentiment of what the factory does to the chance of sensuous interaction with objects. Adorno and Horkheimer's notion could perhaps be suggested by a filmic montage overlaying propaganda footage of hygienic Nazi health exercises, or an ecstatic mound of footballers, with the woodcut illustrations of an early edition of *Juliette* and shots of drilling and pressing machines turning out hollowly seductive plastic mannequins. Such images would

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.186.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.81-119.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.88.

exaggerate erotic degradation into a manifestation of the fall, 'but only exaggeration is true.'¹

Adorno links his reading of Kafka with this interpretation of de Sade, controversially taking both as operating within 'the tradition of enlightenment,'² against those who wish to see them as champions of myth. In Kafka's prose, just as in de Sade's, 'the monstrous becomes the entire world.'³ Kafka reportedly described de Sade as 'the true patron of our age.'⁴

De Sade's erotics of death is related by Erich Heller to Kafka's short story 'In the Penal Colony.'⁵ The sadistic officer's yearning for the ecstatic death he imagines his victims achieve is denied. The harrow that is meant to inscribe sentence upon the body of the prisoner (in a parody of the unity of legal theory and practice) malfunctions and kills him too fast. Heller reads this as Kafka's Schopenhauerian refusal of self-conquest *via* suicide.⁶ Although Adorno does not provide a detailed reading of this story, he does affirm its importance.⁷ If, as seems appropriate, we extrapolate by reading it through Adorno's development in *Minima Moralia* of Nietzsche's thoughts on suicide, we can speculate that Adorno would add a social dimension to Heller's discussion of the officer's wish for a blissful death under the harrow. Adorno writes of the

mournful truth that has emerged from Zarathustra's exuberant doctrine of freely-chosen death. Freedom has contracted to pure negativity, and what in the days of *art nouveau* was known as a beautiful death has shrunk to

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.118.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.266.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.265.

⁴E. Heller (1974), *Kafka*, London: Fontana, p.35.

⁵F. Kafka (1988), *The Collected Short Stories of Franz Kafka*, London: Penguin, pp. 140-167.

⁶Heller, *Kafka*, p.36.

⁷Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.254-255.

the wish to curtail the infinite torment of dying, in a world where there are far worse things to fear than death.¹

It is almost unnecessary to add that the terror of the harrow prefigures the scientific mechanisation of the seductive instruments of torture and murder, which continues apace today. In Freudian terms, the will-to-technologise could be understood as a sublimation of the death instincts in the service of life. The redeployment of that will in the death-industries marks a fusion of Eros and Thanatos in which the dark instincts take the upper hand.²

Adorno throws a similarly psychoanalytic light on Kafka's eroticised literary death-wishes. Freud identifies the death instinct as an entropic tendency towards release from the effort of holding life together: 'On the basis of theoretical considerations supported by biology, we put forward the hypothesis of a *death instinct*, the task of which is to lead organic life back into the inanimate state.'³

Adorno explicates the death wishes in Kafka's short stories *The Hunter Gracchus* and *A Dream*⁴ against the background of a socially aware appropriation of Freud's speculative concept. In other words, Adorno takes the struggles of holding human life together today to be in the last instance socially determined.

The Hunter Gracchus is killed during a hunt but sails forever on the ship of death, never reaching the other side he yearns for. This yearning for an end goes against the ego's drive to preserve the self, but the prospect of everlasting undeath is clearly a worse fate. Essentially, Adorno takes the persistence of the desire for death as also a repressed

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.38.

²Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*:

³Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.380.

⁴Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, pp.226-234 and pp.399-401

yearning for a world good enough to allow death to become a fitting consummation to a life that had actually been lived. In 'Notes on Kafka', Adorno relates Gracchus's twilight zone between life and death to the horrific situation within concentration camps, where

the boundary between life and death was eradicated. A middle ground was created, inhabited by living skeletons and putrefying bodies, victims unable to take their own lives, Satan's laughter at the hope of abolishing death. As in Kafka's twisted epics, what perished there was that which provided the criterion of experience - life lived out to its end. Gracchus is the consummate refutation of the possibility banished from the world: to die after a long and full life.¹

Following the idea of revealing the truth through exaggeration, Adorno elsewhere extends responsibility for the camp's murder of death (as a consummation) to the whole of social existence:

In a life that is no longer disfigured, that no longer prohibits, in a life that would no longer cheat men of their dues - in such a life men would probably no longer have to hope, in vain, that this life would after all give them what it had so far refused. For the same reason they would not have to fear so greatly that they would lose this life, no matter how deeply this fear had been ingrained in them.²

Kafka provides glimpses of such a utopian relation to death. In *A Dream*, Josef K. dreams that he arrives at a cemetery. Coming across a freshly covered grave, he curiously watches the workmen erecting the gravestone. A mysteriously embarrassed craftsman begins the inscription, but hesitates, glancing nervously at K. - who is peculiarly upset by the man's unease. K. begins to cry, whereupon the man takes up his task

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.260.

²T.W. Adorno (1973), *The Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. K. Tarnowski and F. Will, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, p.155.

again, inscribing a 'J.' The truth at last dawns on K. The grave is his. K. breaks through the earth and sinks gently backwards into the pit on a cushion of air. At this moment, K.'s grief seems to become joy - a joy broken off when the dreamer awakes: 'while he was already being received into impenetrable depths, his head still straining upwards on his neck, his own name raced across the stone above him in great flourishes. Enchanted by the sight, he woke up.'¹

However, keen to avoid any connection between his ideas and Heidegger's, Adorno makes it clear that writers gruesomely enchanted with the notion of death, such as de Sade and Kafka, are preferable to those who spiritualise death by purifying it of its materiality. Such theory 'falsely cleanses death from its misery and stench - from being an animalistic kicking of the bucket.'² K.'s dream of a beautiful death is a dream after all. Adorno wants to clarify this material by reference to certain perverse impulses of childhood, on which the dark writers all draw.

The death instincts may be a motor of infantile research in the same way as sexuality. Adorno hints that the fusion of sexual and death drives in anal erotism is of prime importance in this context. A Kafkaesque passage in *Negative Dialectics* connects the infantile fascination with death and decay to the unshrinking gaze philosophy needs to sense the importance of the gruesome material that, as part of culture, it usually evades: the crude suffering of the body in an unfair world, which for Adorno is exemplified by Auschwitz. Children are instinctive materialists who

sense some of this in the fascination that issues from the flayer's zone, from carcasses, from the repulsively sweet odor of putrefaction, and from the opprobrious terms

¹Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, p.400-401. See Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.271.

²Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*, p.156.

used for that zone. The unconscious power of that realm may be as great as that of infantile sexuality; the two intermingle in the anal fixation, but they are scarcely the same. An unconscious knowledge whispers to the child what is repressed by civilized education; this is what matters, says the whispering voice. And the wretched physical existence strikes a spark in the supreme interest that is scarcely less repressed; it kindles a 'What is that?' and 'Where is it going?' The man who managed to recall what used to strike him in the words 'dung hill' and 'pig sty' might be closer to absolute knowledge than Hegel's chapter in which readers are promised such knowledge only to have it withheld with a superior mien.¹

Adorno has a real gift for producing philosophy from such ephemera. The whispering voice talks to adults through the dark writers. As a materialist critique of Hegel's smug closure of his grand metaphysical system, this passage is devastating. Adorno's materialism is in this instance more Freudian than Marxian, and this approach to loosening the hold of reality is taken to its artistic zenith by Kafka's black humour.

Adorno's recollection of the unsurpassed hilarity of toilet humour is forced on the reader during a discussion of the complicity of culture with the concentration camp. Adorno refers to Brecht's observation that the mansion of culture is built of dogshit.² This line of Brecht's may well be the source of Adorno's Freudianised version in *Minima Moralia*: 'The brightest rooms are the secret domain of faeces.'³ By making us laugh dirtily at the end of a passage on the camps dedicated to racial purity, Adorno produces a dramatic estrangement effect of his own. Undiminished experience always jars. The idea is to use the infantile fascination with death to prompt awareness of the division within ourselves between a mimetic empathy for suffering that, given its ubiquity, could destroy happiness forever, and a sadistic/self-preserving

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.366.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.366. Also see Jay, *Adorno*, p.19.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.59. Also see my Chapter One, Section III.

drive that allows us to enjoy ourselves despite, or even because of, the suffering of others. The warring dynamics of infantile drives towards identification with, and jealousy of, others are important primal models for these reactions.

Following the uncomfortable logic of these reflections, Adorno, like Freud, demonstrates that anyone who wants to understand the determinants of such reactions of sympathy and sadism cannot avoid personal self-analysis. This is not *only* something to be chalked up against theory, as it so often is in critiques (such as the one I provide in Section VII) which seek to show how theory is contaminated by the personal life of its author: the formation of the subject cannot ever be stripped out to leave a pure reason, but must reflect on itself.

If the personal life of Adorno is registered in the secondary literature, it is usually in the negative sense of demonstrating how his dark tone was born of the specific clash between his protected bourgeois childhood and his adult experience of persecution by the Nazis. Jamie Owen Daniel talks of :

the concrete personal humiliation he increasingly suffered as a result of the implementation of the Nazi racial laws, beginning with the revocation of his *venia legendi*, the official authorization required for him to teach at a German university [...] For a short time he was able to work as an independent music critic, albeit only clandestinely, since he was restricted from publishing under his own name. The racial laws made it illegal for him even to give music lessons to anyone but non-Aryans.¹

This may not sound like much compared to the horrors suffered by others, but it was a bad enough fate for an intellectual musicologist. It

¹J.O. Daniel (1992), 'Temporary Shelter: Adorno's Exile and the Language of Home', in *New Formations*, no. 17 Summer 1992, pp.26-35, p.27.

obviously came as a shock when political developments finally affected Adorno in this way, and (as I show in more detail in Section III) he reacted with a denial of the dangers, trying to stay in Germany as long as possible. Daniel draws attention to Lowenthal's recollections of Adorno:

He just couldn't believe that to him, son of Oskar Wiesengrund, nephew of Aunt Agathe, and son of Maria, anything might ever happen, for it was absolutely clear that the bourgeoisie would soon become fed up with Hitler. This kind of naive unfamiliarity with the real world [...] must be borne in mind if one is to fully understand Adorno's personal history.¹

The temptation when interpreting such biographical remarks is perhaps to conclude that as this personal and historical conjunction has now passed, we can do without the theoretical excesses that it generated. But as Nietzsche pointed out, no philosophy can escape such verdicts: 'It has gradually become clear to me what every great philosophy has hitherto been: a confession on the part of its author and a kind of involuntary memoir.'² Adorno's work shows that if *all* theory is itself nothing but the passage of personal and historical conjunctions, then the real question is the extent to which this fact is reflected upon. The acute self-analyses of figures such as Freud, Nietzsche, Kafka and Proust are the model for Adorno's theoretical working-through in *Minima Moralia* of the personal crisis alluded to by Lowenthal and Daniel. The point is that these figures all made an attempt to understand the role of their specific experiences through the development of their theory, rather than seeking

¹Lowenthal, *Critical Theory and the Frankfurt Theorists*, p.63-64. And see Daniel 'Temporary Shelter', p.27.

²F. Nietzsche (1990), *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, p.37.

to lay it to one side whenever they lifted up their pens. Adorno tries to turn his naiveté into a self-reflective 'second naiveté'.¹

Adorno uses his awareness to provide a personal example of how warring impulses towards sympathy and sadism are forced into a distorted form by a world of economic injustice. From the perspective of a coddled little boy for whom luxury maintains the illusion that people get what they ought to, the first experience of real social injustice is a psychological disaster:

In early childhood I saw the first snow-shovellers in thin shabby clothes. Asking about them, I was told they were men without work who were given this job so they could earn their bread. Then they get what they deserve, having to shovel snow, I cried out in rage, bursting uncontrollably into tears.²

Adorno's candid memory shows, *contra* Nietzsche, that bitterness is not only a part of slave morality, but that the master has to projectively resent the slave in order to control his potential for identification with him. Adorno maintains the exaggerated tension between the child's rage and his tears, as an energy source for the will-to-change that theory nurtures against the relations that leave so many out in the cold. Adorno's aphorism 'The splinter in your own eye is the best magnifying glass',³ means daring to use one's own character flaws as the fuel for insight into social conditions. In Sections III, VI and (especially) VII, I evaluate the question of whether Adorno's self-critical magnifying glass nevertheless introduces deceptive distortions of its own.

Adorno's attempts to trace the elusive connections between dark literature, childhood and society show the psychological dimension of his

¹T.W. Adorno (1992), 'Valéry Proust Museum', in *Prisms*, pp.173-186, p.181. Daniel talks of Adorno's '*cultivated* naiveté' in 'Temporary Shelter', p.27.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.190.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.50.

work to be one moment of a dialectical constellation which both accords the psychological its due respect, and also stands as a critique of psychologism. As Adorno put it when discussing Kafka's critical literary exaggeration of Freudian clinical theory: 'Instead of curing neurosis, he [Kafka] seeks in it itself the healing force, that of knowledge: the wounds with which society brands the individual are seen by the latter as ciphers of the social untruth, as the negative of truth.'¹

This use of dialectical exaggeration in Adorno's readings of Freud and Kafka requires some detailed explication in order to clarify Adorno's critical objectives.

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.252.

II: Exaggerating Psychoanalysis.

In Chapter One, I noted Adorno's critique of Freud's over-exaggerated, adult interpretation of childhood impulses and experiences. An uncanny sense of sexual difference which Adorno evokes by a "Proustian" contrast between a woman's perfume and the smell of a man's leather armchair, Freud might ascribe to a primal scene of adult lovemaking. If no such primal scene has occurred, Freud can always fall back on his notion that heredity includes racial memories of such scenes from the distant past, conveniently overcoming the obstacles individual case histories might pose for his theories:

a child catches hold of this phylogenetic experience where his own experience fails him. He fills in the gaps in individual truth with prehistoric truth; he replaces occurrences in his own life by occurrences in the life of his ancestors.¹

Given the aphorism, 'In psychoanalysis nothing is true except the exaggerations,'² we might expect the materialist Adorno to approve of Freud's exaggerated tracing back of bizarre unconscious images to an underlying historical event. But in 'Notes on Kafka,' Adorno is critical of Freud's treatment of such images 'not as products of the imagination, but in large measure as real events.'³ Adorno describes Freud's insistence on the actuality of reconstructed scenes of parental copulation and the speculative prehistoric patricides of *Totem and Taboo* as 'eccentricities.'⁴ Elsewhere, with particular reference to Freud's psychoanalytic

¹S. Freud (1918), *From the History of an Infantile Neurosis (the 'Wolf Man')*, in Freud (1991), *Case Histories II* (PFL 9), pp.227-366, p.337.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.49.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.251.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.251.

reconstruction of history in *Moses and Monotheism*,¹ Adorno claims that the literalness of Freud's reconstruction unwisely underestimates the contribution of unconscious phantasy, which is usually so dominant in Freud.²

Freud speculates that the people of Israel actually killed the wrathful Moses in a repetition of the earlier prehistoric rebellions of son against father in the primal horde.³ Guilt for this murder is recollected in the doctrine of original sin, has been rationalised *via* reaction-formation in the notion of the Jew's status as the chosen people, and also sublimated in the cultural achievements of their proto-rationalistic monotheism. Judaism displaces to the phantasised deity Moses' harshly paternal character, and converts remorse for the real murder into veneration, a pattern eventually repeated again through the murder and subsequent deification of Christ. Various Jewish and Christian rituals centred around the sharing of food revive the primitive totem meal, which originated in the cannibalistic murder of the primal father.

Adorno claims that the literalness of this hypothesis regresses behind Freud's most challenging theory, which insists on the predominance of psychical over material reality:

In making the leap from psychological images to historical reality, he forgets what he himself discovered - that all reality undergoes modifications upon entering the unconscious [...] It is this short-circuit between reality and the unconscious which lends psychoanalysis its apocryphal features.⁴

¹S. Freud (1939), *Moses and Monotheism*, in Freud (1990), *The Origins of Religion* (PFL 13), pp.237-386.

²Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.80.

³Freud also suggests there were two different Moses, but I want to avoid such complications here. The prehistoric rebellions are described in S. Freud (1913), *Totem and Taboo*, in Freud (1990), *The Origins of Religion* (PFL 13), pp.43-224.

⁴Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.80.

Presumably, Adorno would see the Oedipal content of cultural and religious history as an expression of the psychological reality of the complex, not the other way round. The problem is that Freud ultimately demands too great a convergence between the psychical and historical worlds (Oedipal phantasy of patricide = killing of primal father/Moses).

Perhaps Adorno raises these issues in his essay on Kafka because Kafka's wrestling match with psychoanalytic material is a wrestling match with his Jewish identity. The same could be said of Adorno, as I suggest in Section III. For Freud, too, coming to terms with the psychological meaning of the religion of his fathers was a struggle, only completed just before he died. In the prefatory notes to the final section of *Moses and Monotheism*, Freud writes of 'the quite special difficulties which have weighed on me during my composition of this study.'¹ For a man whose identity was Jewish, debunking the scriptures in the spirit of scientific enlightenment must have been an Oedipally charged enterprise. 'Jewish mysticism was never far below the surface of [Freud's] thoughts.'²

Paradoxically, it is only at the point when Freud says he felt 'persecuted not only for my line of thought, but also for my "race,"'³ in exile in England, that he dares publish his final essay on Moses. He provides a political rationalisation for this - in liberal England, he need not fear any religious authority. Another reason might be that, in the face of the Nazi assault on Jewry, Freud's critique of the Biblical story becomes a defence of the importance of Jewish culture. The essay includes speculation on the ancient roots of anti-Semitism.⁴ Perhaps the young Jew, Shlomo Sigismund, who felt shamed by his father's inaction in the face of an anti-Semitic assault - but internalised it to the point of becoming

¹Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.298.

²Clark, *Freud*, p.12.

³Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.298.

⁴Freud *Moses and Monotheism*, p.334-336.

Sigmund and denying the Jewish roots of psychoanalysis, finally manages to express himself. In exile and close to death, he can defend the religion of his father, just as when a boy he must have yearned to protect his father from the lout who knocked his hat off in the street.¹ But, as is usual with such belated expressions of identification, the opposite mental current gains expression as well, in that Freud's defence of Jewish thought continues his shame for his father's weakness, by rejecting the claim to spiritual truth manifested in the scriptures. Freud can defend the Jews whilst killing God, whereas anti-Semites defend God whilst killing the Jews.²

One component of anti-Semitism is the resentment felt by other peoples for the extravagant claims of Judaism:

I venture to assert that jealousy of the people which declared itself the first born, favourite child of God the Father, has not yet been surmounted among other peoples even today: it is as though they had thought there was truth in the claim.³

The truth is that the Jews successfully made instinctual renunciations which younger peoples are still struggling to make, and which they therefore resent.⁴ Freud suggests that the Jews' struggle to develop an imageless monotheistic religion was a guilty reaction to the historical rebellions. We could say that this struggle is a cultural equivalent of the guilty struggle with and against the father, which according to psychoanalysis is central to individual ego development.

¹Clark, *Freud*, p.12.

²I owe the second half of this sentence to Richard King's response to the first half.

³Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.336.

⁴But see my Chapter Three, Section IV, 'The Dark Side of Mimetic Rebellion', where I discuss Adorno's complementary reversal of Freud's point. Adorno suggests that Jews are also resented for their lack of renunciation.

The culturally universalised renunciation of the sexual and aggressive desires at the centre of the original rebellion is a 'triumph of intellectuality over sensuality, or, strictly speaking, an instinctual renunciation, with all its necessary psychological consequences.'¹ This renunciation is the core of the enlightened consequence of Jewish religion, the shift from direct sense perception (idol as deity) to a sublimated conceptual abstraction (idea of nameless God and his Law). These themes are important in Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. What is important here is that Freud, Kafka and Adorno all promote enlightenment by endorsing certain renunciations, yet also speak of its cost in terms of neurosis and other forms of discontent with civilisation.

Kafka, like Freud, searches for the source of the guilt that haunts even those persecuted unjustly, combining personal, political and historical material in the manner of the dark writers of modernity. *The Trial*² revolves around themes of punishment and reconciliation under an archaic and patriarchal Law. As well as being a direct critique of the legal system, Kafka's Law is an allegory of the Jewish tradition. In *The Trial* the portraits of judges observed by K. are reminiscent of Michelangelo's famous statue of Moses with the tablets of the Law. The leader of the Israelites is on the point of springing to his feet in anger at the sight of the Golden Calf - a betrayal of his people's promise to renounce their graven images. In *The Trial*, the first painted judge looks 'as if in a moment he must spring up with a violent and probably wrathful gesture.'³ In the second picture 'the Judge seemed to be on the point of starting menacingly from his high seat.'⁴ Such features of Kafka's narratives show that his Oedipal themes are not simply a personal self-

¹Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.360.

²F. Kafka, *The Trial*, trans. W & E. Muir, London: Penguin.

³Kafka, *The Trial*, p.120.

⁴Kafka, *The Trial*, p.161.

analysis, though they certainly involve this. Through this analysis, they also explore the Jewish concepts of tradition and the whole relationship between renunciation and enlightenment. In Kafka and Adorno, 'the commandment against the image reveals the origin of criticism.'¹

Adorno prefers Kafka's imaginative treatment of these themes to Freud's literal interpretation, which ultimately insists that Oedipal anxiety has its roots in a real historical patricide. One reason for this preference is that Kafka, like Adorno, does not wholly share Freud's optimism in the progress of enlightenment. So elements of Kafka's work are parodies of psychoanalysis. In *The Trial*, when K. does get a glimpse at what he thinks is one of the books of Law, it is pornographic.² Kafka uses the rebellious images which seethe in the unconscious mind to erect a regressive protest against the repression required for the Jewish advance in intellectuality.

However, since Adorno's doubt about Freud's historical work relies on the idea that unconscious phantasy modifies everything, Adorno is fighting fire with fire when he deploys Kafka against Freud. For Adorno, Kafka's myths are nearer the truth of the unconscious than Freud's, but this reading uses the most basic of Freudian exaggerations - the power of the unconscious - to suggest that phantasies of patricide or infantile voyeurism may be precisely that, and do not *have* to be traced back to actual historical events either in the child's family, or in the primal horde, or in Jewish history. Essentially, Adorno seems to be generalising the shift from material reality to psychical reality that Freud carried through in his controversial abandonment of the seduction theory. Adorno uses the biggest Freudian exaggeration of all to show up the weak points of the over-literal myths of psychoanalysis, which then emerge in a new light.

¹Goetschel, 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', p.85.

²Kafka, *The Trial*, p.60-61.

Thinking this contradiction through is the best way of understanding Adorno's attitude to Freud's most extreme ideas. On the one hand, Adorno is critical of these eccentric exaggerations, but on the other he wants to insist, with Kafka and against the more realistic and pragmatic post-Freudian revisionists who share his scepticism, that in some way these exaggerations contain the real truth of psychoanalysis.

Revisionists might adopt a more anti-Freudian way of reading Adorno's aphorism on exaggerations, taking it to mean that psychoanalysis is itself as true as its wildest theories; i.e. false. Adorno's use of the word 'apocryphal'¹ to describe elements of psychoanalysis certainly points in this direction, as well as maintaining the link between religion and Freud's theory. For atheists, the chief value of the apocryphal stories associated with the Bible is that their exaggerated tales of miracles and of the violent side of Christ's personality expose the official Bible as a cosmetic version already edited from a partially enlightened perspective. Restoring the exaggerated myths reveals the whole text in a new and unfavourably extreme light.

The myths of Freudian psychoanalysis may certainly operate in this manner when, for example, reasonable revisionists² have to admit that the abstract psychoanalytic concepts - which they largely retain - were originally evolved to account for a set of concrete contents - which they largely reject. From this perspective, knowledge of the more extreme side of Freud's work becomes an embarrassment. Revisionist users of the notion of repression often become uneasy when reminded that Freud used the concept almost exclusively to refer to hidden sexual or violent impulses. Insistence on bringing out the stark details of, say, the Oedipus complex, acts to deter acceptance of the abstract metapsychological concepts

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.80

²Such as Alfred Adler, Erich Fromm and Karen Horney.

as well. If this exposure of the strange Freudian content that lurks behind the revisionist modifications goes so far as to include reference to the apocryphally archaic dimension of these sexual and violent currents, i.e. to Freud's conviction that these patterns are laid down as an instinctual inheritance from a speculative past in which primal fathers really did castrate their actually incestuous and patricidal sons, the rejection of psychoanalysis may well become complete.

Adorno certainly wants to undermine any psychoanalytic claim to total validity, but, as I have already tried to demonstrate, Adorno does not insist on analytical orthodoxy over revisionism simply to expose the weakness of the whole edifice by bringing the myths into view. As usual, he wants to show how their falsities can negatively reveal elements of the truth. His standard way of achieving such a theoretical *volte-face* is to show how the fixed ideas of any theoretical system are reflections of the social rigidity which has the world under its spell, and are in this sense unconsciously true: 'The *idée fixe*, like persecution mania, usually relates to the attribution of guilt. The mania's system cannot see through the system of mania, the veil of the social totality.'¹

For example, Hegel's seamless proof that what we are is what we ought to be is only an echo of the airtight bourgeois conviction that humanity has arrived at its ultimate social destination. Likewise, for Adorno, Nietzsche's acerbic assault on the herd is only true as an account of what the capitalist economy does to its victims, as is Freud's related critique of mass psychology. Kafka's paranoid extension of Freud's belief that psychopathology is only exaggerated normality into a whole world-view throws the pretensions of modernity into doubt. Adorno uses the same sort of argument to cover his own back when accused of turning this

¹T.W. Adorno (1993), 'Messages in a Bottle', trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *New Left Review*, no. 200 July-Aug 1993, pp.5-14, p.10.

dialectical tactic into a fetish. "Don't blame me for dialectically linking everything to the social system," he seems to say, "...blame the social system which determines everything, even though it could be otherwise." He makes it clear that he regards negatively dialectical logic, his own *idée fixe*, as a prison out of which thought alone cannot produce freedom: 'Regarding the concrete utopian possibility, dialectics is the ontology of the wrong state of things. The right state of things would be free of it: neither a system nor a contradiction.'¹ Drucilla Cornel explains: 'Negative Dialectics awaits its decline in a redeemed world.'² But until then we have to be content with negative appropriations of whatever puts itself forward as a positive, appropriations secured via reference to the social totality.

From this kind of perspective, the aphorism on the exaggerations of psychoanalysis could be read as a claim that the extreme moments in Freud are the points that best betray his struggle to assimilate extra-psychological factors into his system. For example, rather than explaining the production of patricidal phantasy in boys with gentle fathers by grasping the true horror of the fact that even the most liberal parent must on occasion act as an apologist for senseless social repressions, Freud would rather account for irrationalities in the superego of the offspring of loving parents with reference to primal or biblical human history. Adorno can help us towards a realisation that these moments of bio-mythological excess in Freud's work are usually the points where he is forced to postulate extravagant hypotheses because of his inability to properly theorise the impact of society and culture *via* socialisation. On Adorno's account, the harsh side of the superego is the heir not only of our primal history, but of our recent economic history. I say 'not only' instead of 'not', because Adorno does not absolutely discount the possibility of a hereditary

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.11.

²D. Cornel (1992), *The Philosophy of the Limit*, New York: Routledge, p.20.

dimension to human aggression.¹ This moment of equivocation is rooted in Adorno's very Freudian notion that human history is still only natural history in disguise. Osborne suggests, quoting *Negative Dialectics*, that

Dialectic of Enlightenment does not just 'remind' [contra Jameson, Osborne's target] us of natural history, of history as nature; it gives an account of it via 'the concealment of history's natural growth by history itself' (ND p.358) - the myth of enlightenment - an account that by simultaneously presenting myth *as* enlightenment, doubles back on itself to expound nature as history.²

Kafka's strange animal stories may be seen as shadowy insights into the entwinement of history and the animalistic phylogenetic heritage - an idea to which I return in Section V, below.

Freud himself is aware of the weaknesses of the concept of the archaic heritage. He concedes that his theory fails to properly differentiate between instinctual and social modes of ideational reproduction: 'I made no distinction between the two and was not clearly aware of my audacity in failing to do so.'³ Further, he was well aware that his views on the accumulated historical modification of instinct are contradicted by Darwinian genetic theory, but still stuck to his hypothesis of archaic memory traces:

My position, no doubt, is made more difficult by the present attitude of biological science, which refuses to hear of the inheritance of acquired characteristics by succeeding generations. I must, however, in all modesty confess that nevertheless I cannot do without this factor in biological evolution.⁴

¹S. Breuer (1993), 'The Long Friendship: On Theoretical Differences Between Adorno and Horkheimer', in S. Benhabib *et al* (eds), *On Max Horkheimer: New Perspectives*, Massachusetts: MIT Press, pp.257-279, esp. p.273-274.

²Osborne, 'A Marxism for the Postmodern?', p.179.

³Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.345.

⁴Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.345.

Yet Freud provides some pointers towards a way of resolving his own moments of excess through thinking about human society. In Freud's theory the superego is extra-personal in origin, and it is a short step from this to postulate the colonisation of its function by distorted authority relations. Those relations operate at a socio-historical level, but are experienced by children as mediated through their parents (and as worked over by the infantile unconscious, which adds its own terrifying impulses to the image of the parent). Whether archetypes of these parental imagos are passed on culturally or biologically may in the last instance be unimportant. What matters is the psychosocial meanings attached to the imagos.

Such critical transpositions allow Freud's myths to become the key to the contradictions allowing a properly immanent critique of psychoanalysis. Freud's idea of the primal father can show us what the world makes of men in the charged minds of children, and the relation of this to the religious imagery deployed by Adorno and Kafka. As Freud observed, a 'child's emotional impulses are intensely and inexhaustibly deep to a degree quite other than those of an adult; only religious ecstasy can bring them back.'¹

By combining this with Adorno's account of sexual difference we could understand Kafka's Mosaic images of judges as wrathful fathers moving, irritated by children, from their leather armchairs. As I have suggested in Chapter One with regard to Proust, Adorno uses readings of literature to show how the creative imagination may reproduce psychoanalytical insight at a higher level of reflection than Freud's scientific texts. This tactic is certainly at work in Adorno's 'Notes on Kafka.' Adorno claims that Kafka takes the bio-mythological excesses of

¹Freud, *Moses and Monotheism*, p.383.

psychoanalysis seriously because of their critical potential as a tool for exposing the weaknesses of the ego concomitant to modernity. Moreover, Kafka's work operates as a critical *rescue* of Freud's tendency towards exaggeration, not simply as its negation.

Adorno uses Kafka to push psychoanalysis a bit further in a direction already implicit in it - towards a decentring of the ego through an appreciation of the irrational elements competing with it. Adorno's push is to show that the ego does not simply compete with these irrational aspects of the mind, but is both determined by them and complicit with their mode of operation - as is betrayed by the normally unconscious operation of the ego defence mechanisms (such as the repression of the id into the ego-alien, discussed above). Adorno's statement on the relationship between Kafka and Freud may also be taken as an exact definition of his concept of immanent critique, as instantiated in his own confrontation with Freud:

As though conducting an experiment, he [Kafka] studies what would happen if the results of psychoanalysis were to prove true not merely metaphorically but in the flesh. He accepts psychoanalysis in so far as it convicts civilisation and bourgeois individuation of their illusoriness; he explodes it by taking it more exactly at its word than it does itself.¹

So, the over-literality Adorno identifies as a fault in Freud, he lauds in Kafka as a virtue. Kafka's *literary* short-circuit of the relation between social reality and the personal unconscious takes dreams, hallucinations and *déjà vu* as what they feel like - real - and uses them to identify the ego as the true illusion, the really marginal element of personality. This exaggeration again takes its cue from Freud's claim that pathology acts as a window into what is normally repressed, but is more

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.251.

extreme than anything in Freud himself, bar the clinical descriptions of overt psychosis. According to Adorno, Kafka makes that extreme into the rule, and through it finds his power of expression: 'every sentence has been snatched from the zone of insanity into which all knowledge must venture if it is to become such in an age when sound common sense only reinforces universal blindness.'¹

When discussing the relation between artistic creation and the method of free association, Freud quotes Schiller. Schiller talks in a similar way to Adorno about the relationship between madness, poesis and the hasty criticism of imagination:

You worthy critics, or whatever you may call yourselves, are ashamed or afraid of the momentary and passing madness which is found in all real creators, the longer or shorter duration of which distinguished the thinking artist from the dreamer.²

The concordances at work between the ideas of Freud, Kafka and Adorno suggest my final reading of Adorno's aphorism: Freud's exaggerations repay close study because even the strange way they push beyond the limits of common sense turns out to be eminently rational, if their latent content can be brought out by critique.

In order to clarify what is at stake for Adorno in his study of these dark writers of the Jewish tradition, in my next section I discuss his personal and theoretical orientation in that tradition, as exemplified by his debt to the work of Walter Benjamin. I also develop the links I have begun to establish between messianism, the method of psychoanalysis and Adorno's reading of Kafka.

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', pp.253-254.

²Schiller, letter to Korner of Dec 1st 1788, in Freud (1932), *The Interpretation of Dreams*, p.111-112.

III: Through the Eyes of an Artificial Angel: Secular Theology in Adorno's Freudo-Marxist Reading of Kafka.¹

The theological heritage of art is the secularization of revelation, which defines the ideal and limit of every work. The contamination of art with revelation would amount to the unreflective repetition of its fetish character on the level of theory. The eradication of every trace of revelation from art would, however, degrade it to the undifferentiated repetition of the status quo.²

A theological moment, secularised to varying degrees, persists in the work of the key Frankfurt theorists. From this point of view, human history has not yet begun. What Hegel would have as the end could be a beginning. The political-messianic element in this reading of Judaeo-Christian thought appropriates the scriptural promise of the redemption of historical suffering in heaven, as a trope for an earthly revolution in social conditions. This would allow a psychological revolution: the development of a new style of subjectivity, the birth of a new humanity. This hybridised theory (by Freudo-Marxism out of Judaeo-Christianity) of psychosocial transformation is what I mean by the deliberate oxymoron 'secular theology'.³

In certain of his essays published in the 1930s,⁴ Max Horkheimer was concerned to rescue the critical potential of religious and metaphysical

¹Since completing this thesis, this section, Section VII and one or two other elements of this chapter have been superseded through their revision as a paper ('Through the Eyes of an Artificial Angel: Secular Theology in Theodor W. Adorno's Freudo-Marxist Reading of Franz Kafka and Walter Benjamin,' in P. Leonard (ed.)(forthcoming 1998), *Trajectories of Mysticism in Theory and Literature*, London: Macmillan). The most significant change is my addition of comments on a 1934 letter from Adorno to Benjamin which presages Adorno's later remarks on messianic illumination from *Minima Moralia*. This alters somewhat my chronology of this theme.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.106.

³'Form secularizes the theological model of the world as an image made in God's likeness.' Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.143.

⁴M. Horkheimer (1989), 'Thoughts on Religion' and 'The Latest Attack on Metaphysics', in *Critical Theory: Selected Essays*, pp.129-131 and pp.132-187. Also see Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School*, pp.48-50.

thought from positivism: 'The concept of God was for a long time the place where the idea was kept alive that there are other norms besides those to which nature and society give expression in their operation.'¹ Now, however, theology should be mediated by a strictly secular materialism: 'The productive kind of criticism of the status quo which found expression in earlier times as a belief in a heavenly judge today takes the form of a struggle for more rational forms of social life.'² The connection between theology and critique remained important to the Frankfurt School. As late as 1989, Leo Lowenthal talked of the School as having been 'entrusted' with 'the heritage of Jewish messianism.'³

But Adorno's own relationship with his Jewish identity was famously ambivalent, despite his fascination with (and promotion of) his friend Benjamin's theological work. The early Frankfurt School duplicated Marx's emphasis on the need for a thorough-going capitalist modernisation of traditional national or religious identity in the direction of class differentiation.⁴ The belated interest of the Frankfurt School in their Jewish heritage was prompted by the most urgent, and most unforeseen, of political developments: the rise of the Nazis and the perpetration of the Holocaust.

Adorno's ambivalence towards the original religion of his Protestantised Jewish father is clear both in Adorno's flirtation with his

¹Horkheimer, 'Thoughts on Religion', p.129.

²Horkheimer, 'Thoughts on Religion', p.129.

³L. Lowenthal (1991), 'Address upon Accepting the Theodor W. Adorno Prize on 1/10/1989', trans. Jamie Owen Daniel, in *New German Critique*, no. 54, pp.179-182, Telos Press, p.182.

⁴M. Jay provides a complete overview of the Frankfurtian ambivalence towards the Jewish question in 'The Jews and the Frankfurt School: Critical Theory's Analysis of Anti-Semitism', in *New German Critique*, no. 19, pp.137-149. Horkheimer shared Adorno's early rejection of, and later rapprochement towards, Jewish themes. Jay suggests that at that time, 'the more radical the Marxist, the less interested in the specificity of the Jewish question.' (p.138) However, Jay rather underestimates Adorno's interest in religion. Adorno tended to plead for Benjamin's work to Horkheimer, right from the early days.

mother's Catholic faith, and in his later abandonment of the paternal half of his double-barrelled surname (Wiesengrund) in favour of the maternal (Adorno).¹ This later prompted accusations of near-collaboration from Hannah Arendt.² Although Adorno dropped his father's name, he kept the initial - perhaps an indication of mixed feelings? The irony, given the rejection of his name, is that Adorno's father could be taken as the model for such an assimilationist move. Leo Lowenthal, who was always more explicitly involved with the Jewish tradition than Adorno, relates an interesting encounter with Adorno's family:

my relation to his parents was disturbed by a dissonance perhaps not uncharacteristic for the history of assimilated German Jews. When I accepted my first paying job in 1923 [...] bearing the overrated title of 'Syndic of the Advisory Board for Jewish Refugees from Eastern Europe,' Oskar Wiesengrund told his son that Leo Lowenthal was not welcome in his house as long as he had something to do with Eastern European Jews.³

There is evidence that by the time *The Authoritarian Personality* was published in 1950, Adorno had seen this for what it was: Jewish anti-Semitism. It is tempting to see the following remark as influenced by personal history as much as by empirical research:

In Germany at least, the 'autochthonous' Jews used to discriminate heavily against refugees and immigrants from the East and often enough comforted themselves with the idea that Nazi policies were directed merely against the 'Ostjuden.' Distinctions of this sort seem to promote gradual persecution of the Jews, group by group, with the aid of the smooth rationalization that only those are to be excluded who do not belong anyway.⁴

¹Jay, *Adorno*, p.19.

²Jay, *Adorno*, p.34.

³Lowenthal, *Critical Theory and the Frankfurt Theorists*, p.63.

⁴Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.316.

But in the 1930s, Adorno was distanced from his Jewish background to the extent that he did what he could to remain in Nazi Germany by seeming to belong. In 1934 he produced a 'mildly positive review' of a piece of music by Müntzel, a composer with Nazi leanings.¹ The poem which provided the title of the piece was even dedicated to Hitler by its author, Baldur von Schirach. Phillipe Lacoue-Labarthe provides a few incriminating extracts from the review. For example, Adorno writes - apparently approvingly - that Müntzel's cycle is 'consciously National Socialist.'² Wiggershaus suggests that at the very least, Adorno was here guilty of 'political opportunism.'³

However, Adorno's eventual realisation, as the racial laws tightened, that to stay in Germany was to be rounded up as a Jew (regardless of his personal identity), his subsequent experience as an exile in the UK and USA, the suicide of Benjamin on the Spanish border and the eventual revelation of the Holocaust all forced him to grapple anew with his status as a surviving Jew.⁴ Adorno came to regard his political blindness *vis-a-vis* the irreversible nature of the Nazi climb to power, and his attempt to find a space in Germany in which he could still work (through such means as the musical review) as a '*Dummheit*' (a stupidity).⁵ Adorno said that he bitterly regretted his 'crudely tactical' attempts to help the new music through 'the winter of the Third Reich.'⁶

Adorno here benefits from the luxury of hindsight - as do those who assess the political correctness of his strategy. Presumably those Jews

¹R. King (1996), 'Culture and Barbarism', Unpublished MS, University of Nottingham, p.5.

²Adorno, in P. Lacoue-Labarthe (1990), *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, Cambridge: Blackwell, p.117(n).

³Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.157.

⁴Jay, *Adorno*, p.19-21.

⁵King, 'Culture and Barbarism', p.6.

⁶Adorno, quoted by Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, art and Politics*, p.118(n). Adorno was responding to the students who uncovered his musical review during the 1960s.

who tried the hardest to stay in Germany died in the camps alongside those without the resources to escape, but to suggest that they were therefore collaborators would be to identify with the aggressor and to underestimate the ties to place, language and family that encouraged what now looks like compromise. Perhaps Adorno's experience of damaged life as a politically naive German Jew in the late 1930s qualifies him to talk about that period with a veracity denied to those who made a clear-cut choice earlier on.

Evidence of the brutal shattering of Adorno's naiveté emerges in his work from the 1940s onwards. Adorno could not in the end wholly expunge his religious identity and became, in a highly qualified theoretical sense, a Jew. This becoming, although forced by political circumstance, is mostly a self-conscious theoretical strategy which provides a series of rich tensions in Adorno's work between tradition and critique, between messianism and Marxism. But this strategy also enacts itself in more unconscious ways, producing a less productive tension. His use of messianic tropes can be read as a screen for a judgmental absolutism of the type he attacks as authoritarian in others. History renders such judgements ironic. For example, Adorno referred to Erich Fromm, who was always explicitly engaged with Judaism, as a 'professional Jew,'¹ yet in the end it was Adorno who received a professorship under the Third Amendment of the Law on Compensation for National Socialist Injustice in post-War Germany.² In addition, given Adorno's various compromises, one is led to at least consider the possibility that his relentless assault on Heidegger involved a measure of displaced guilt.

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p. 266.

²Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.466-467. Adorno was understandably ambivalent about this, and it did lead to resentment towards him from other members of the university. Wiggershaus calls this 'the old Jewish experience of being simultaneously privileged and nevertheless stigmatised and vulnerable.'

But questions of guilt are discussed too glibly by those who have never been tested in comparable situations. I would nevertheless follow Adorno's contention¹ that the crucial difference between the two thinkers is their theoretical reaction to the political and personal consequences of living through the Nazi period. Whether through guilt or not, Adorno is at least driven to publicly reflect for the rest of his life on the meaning of Auschwitz.² Heidegger may have personal regrets, but his theory develops ever more rarefied considerations of Being, largely devoid of detailed reflection on the Holocaust.

Whatever the reasons, Adorno's reflection on his experience of exile seemingly involved a renewed sense of engagement with elements of the Jewish tradition. This engagement unsurprisingly manifested itself in a sympathetic, even evangelical, approach to the theological elements of Benjamin's work, which Adorno had been using in his teaching since 1929.³ Benjamin's death must have been an excruciating watershed for Adorno, who responded by trying to keep him alive in theory. The most famous messianic element in Adorno is at the end of *Minima Moralia*, in the section written in 1946-1947: 'Perspectives must be fashioned that

¹See Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics*, p.117-118(n).

²I see this positively, and do not wish to align myself with Zolan Tar and Arnold Künzli, who Jay accuses of *reducing* 'negative dialectics to Adorno's belated guilt over his earlier rejection of Judaism, produced by his surviving the Holocaust, rather than seeing it as an expression of his (and Horkheimer's) positive identification with the Jews.' (Jay, 'The Jews and the Frankfurt School', p.149(n62)). The self-analysis of guilt is a noble enough motor for theory after Auschwitz.

³It has been suggested that Adorno actually suppressed Benjamin's Brecht-inspired shift to historical materialism, preferring to emphasise the theological phase of Benjamin's work. Benjamin's materialist turn was perhaps too Marxist for Adorno. See J. Roberts 1982, *Walter Benjamin*, London: Macmillan. On Adorno's early Benjamin seminars at Frankfurt, see M. Brodersen 1996, *Walter Benjamin; a Biography*, trans. M.R. Green and I. Ligers, London: Verso, pp.198-200. The politico-messianic element of Adorno's theory is also influenced by the work of Ernst Bloch, although a consideration of this is beyond the scope of this thesis. Adorno says 'Bloch is a mystic in his paradoxical unity of theology and atheism.' T.W. Adorno 1991, *Notes to Literature, Volume One*, trans. S.W. NicholSEN, New York: Columbia U.P., p.209.

displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.¹

This motif went on to play an important part in Adorno's mature philosophy. His essay 'Notes on Kafka' may be taken as a model of the estranging perspective recommended in *Minima Moralia*. This essay is found at the end of the collection *Prisms*. Given the title of this collection, it is no surprise that in 'Notes on Kafka' Adorno hints at the quasi-messianic motif of an illumination which later becomes more sophisticated in *Negative Dialectics* and *Aesthetic Theory*. As one of the 'black' writers of modernity, Kafka's illuminations are dark ones.

The metaphor can be made more explicit than it is in Adorno's writing: a prism should be able to combine fragmented wavelengths of light to produce a pure white radiance, but if that prism is a theoretical one working with the muddled hues of modernity, then mixing them together can only yield darkness (as every artist working with paint, not light, knows).

In *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno develops the notion, characterising philosophy as a prism for capturing colours that cannot yet appear in their true light, optically reprising his dialectic of distance and proximity:

The colour that cannot fade comes from the nonexistent. Thought is its servant, a piece of existence extending - however, negatively - to that which is not. The utmost distance alone would be proximity; philosophy is the prism in which its colour is caught.²

The notion of illumination is of course originally a biblical theme. According to some interpretations of *Genesis*, when God said 'Let there be

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.247. Jay briefly discusses the utopia of 'benignly interacting particularities' behind this image of a messianic beyond in *Adorno*, p.20.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.57. Translation amended in line with Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p.222.

light,¹ 'neither here nor in verses 14-18 is an original *creative* act implied. A different word is used. The sense is, made to *appear*; made *visible*. '²

The idea of the light of God is an allegory of clarification, not just illumination: from the darkness emerges self-conscious understanding of what is already there, not simply light. This ideal of transparency underpins the philosophical Enlightenment, despite its critique of revelation and faith. But Adorno believes that in our age, enlightened demands for clarity usually serve to hide the truth, and he prefers to critically invert them, in a defence of Kafka's darkly obscure portrayal of a fallen world. A long footnote to one of Adorno's essays on Hegel explicitly relates negative theology to his critique of enlightenment:

A philosophical history of clarity would need to reflect on the fact that originally clarity was both an attribute of the divine when contemplated and its mode of manifestation, the radiant aura of Christian and Jewish mysticism. With the ongoing process of secularisation clarity becomes something methodological, a mode of knowledge made absolute. [...] It becomes a fetish for consciousness. Its adequacy to its objects suppresses the objects themselves and ultimately transcendent meaning as well; at that point philosophy is to be only a 'striving for ultimate clarity.' The word *enlightenment* probably marks the height of this development. Its depotentialisation is no doubt connected with the fact that memory of the prototype of clarity, light, which the pathos of clarity continues to presuppose, has since died out.³

In the posthumously published *Aesthetic Theory*, composed through the late 1950s and 60s, Adorno pushes this darkening all the way:

The black and grey of recent art, its asceticism against color, is the negative apotheosis of color [...] because for

¹Gen.1.4.

²C.I. Scofield (ed) (1917), *The Holy Bible: Authorised Version*, Oxford: OUP, p.3(n4).

³Adorno, 'Skoteinos, or How to Read Hegel', p.96-97(n). Skoteinos means something like 'the obscure/unclear one.'

art, utopia - the yet-to-exist - is draped in black, it remains in all its mediations recollection; recollection of the possible in opposition to the actual that suppresses it; it is the imaginary reparation of the catastrophe of world history; it is freedom, which under the spell of necessity did not - and may not ever - come to pass.¹

Adorno of course dialectically qualifies the idea of dark art, which might be sublated:

perhaps art will one day be able to abolish this axiom without self betrayal, which is what Brecht may have sensed when he wrote 'What times are these, when/to speak of trees is almost a crime/because it passes in silence over such infamy!'²

Such a sublation of darkness would for Adorno have to follow historical change - 'A liberated humanity would be able to inherit its historical legacy free of guilt'³ - but Adorno does not predict such a liberation. This refusal to guarantee freedom separates Adorno from theodicy, and he is careful to break with the idea that the presence of the negative ensures the eventual triumph of positivity. Adorno witheringly notes the tendency of theology to heave 'a sigh of relief whenever its concerns are treated in any way, no matter what the verdict, as if at the end of the tunnel of metaphysical meaninglessness - the presentation of the world as hell - a light glimmers.'⁴

The paradox is that since this immanent critique of meaning is itself meaningful and enlightening, it covertly owes a debt to the tradition of

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.135.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.40.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.40.

⁴Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.153. Adorno is here discussing Beckett, but he often mentions Kafka and Beckett in the same breath. Lowenthal's recollections of Adorno (*Critical Theory and the Frankfurt Theorists*, pp.62-72) note his scepticism towards overly overt theology: Adorno playfully called Lowenthal a 'professional apocalypticist,' because of his theological work (p.64).

negative theology it eschews. It is not possible to talk of darkness without hinting at something else. Willi Goetschel confirms that 'both Kafka and Adorno are grounded in the tradition of Negative Theology.'¹ Adorno derives the paradoxical notion of a dark or profane illumination from Benjamin's work (where the influence of Brecht's talk of dark times can also be detected). If the light has gone from the world, perhaps the time has come for the profane illuminations whose shocks may stir the memory of it, or, rather, the memory of its possibility. The Benjaminian motif of illumination is obvious in his famous essay on surrealism.² Benjamin talks there of 'a dialectical optic that perceives the everyday as impenetrable, the impenetrable as everyday.'³

Such passages in Benjamin confirm Adorno's claim that Benjamin's work is very intimately connected with Kafka's,⁴ for no-one sheds light on everyday impenetrability as well as Kafka. For Adorno, his melancholically dark illuminations are artistic instantiations of a yearning for an enlightened enlightenment and the secular redemption it could bring:

Kafka's remark, that there is infinite hope except for us, could have served as the motto of Benjamin's metaphysics, had he ever deigned to write one, and it is no accident that at the centre of his most elaborate theoretical work, *The Origins of German Tragic Drama*, there is the construction of 'sorrow' as the last self-negating, self-transcending allegory, that of Redemption.⁵

¹Goetschel, 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', p.85.

²W. Benjamin (1986), 'Surrealism', in *Reflections*, New York: Schocken, pp. 177-192.

³Benjamin, 'Surrealism', p.190.

⁴T.W. Adorno (1992), 'A Portrait of Walter Benjamin,' in *Prisms*, pp.227-242, p.230.

⁵Adorno, 'A Portrait of Walter Benjamin', p.230-231.

Developing Benjamin's sorrowful dialectical optics through a strange hybridisation of secular and theological images, Adorno says that Kafka looks through the eye of an 'artificial angel.'¹ Kafka is no angel, but he wrests from the fragments of his experience the material to construct an angelic simulacrum; his work. One might cautiously ask whether Kafka's work is a golem, a magical construct produced to defend the Jews, but it would take a student of the cabbala to answer. Benjamin was such a student, working on the cabbala with Gershom Scholem (with whom Adorno later edited Benjamin's work), and he does draw attention to the make-believe angels who welcome people to the 'Nature Theatre of Oklahoma', which offers jobs to the unemployed in Kafka's redemptive sketch for a possible end to his unfinished novel, *America*:

Before the entrance to the race-course a long low platform had been set up, on which hundreds of women dressed as angels in white robes with great wings on their shoulders were blowing on long trumpets that glittered like gold.²

Angels may not exist, but to the unemployed even the prospect of a job takes on the light of redemption: 'But for the fact that their wings are tied on, these angels might be real.'³ In a paper on Benjamin and Kafka, Giles Peaker draws attention to an unfinished story of Kafka's which further develops the artificiality of the angels in his work, by removing the living element altogether. A man is surprised when what he at first takes as an angel falls through the roof of his room; 'but it was no living angel, only a painted wooden figurehead off the prow of some ship.'⁴ The light in the room has been destroyed, so the man places his last candle into

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.269.

²F. Kafka (1967), *America*, London: Penguin, p.247-248.

³W. Benjamin (1969), 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of His Death' in *Illuminations*, New York: Schocken, pp.111-140, p.125.

⁴F. Kafka (1972), *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, trans. Joseph Kresh, London: Penguin, p.292.

the statue's sword-hilt, 'and then sat late into the night under the angel's faint flame.'¹ Peaker provides the following interpretation;

Here, the image is of the revelatory rendered prosaic, a rendering which hides its obverse, the prosaic as revelatory. Wooden this angel might be, and incapable of revelation, yet it appears, and still carries a 'faint flame.'²

Adorno's reference to an artificial angel also calls to mind Benjamin's description of Klee's work 'Angelus Novus.' For Benjamin, this angel is the angel of history, and his description of the picture in 1940 seems to me to serve equally well as a description of Adorno's portrait of Kafka's work. Benjamin's description actually draws on some earlier remarks of Adorno's in a letter sent from the latter to the former in 1935. Adorno says in the letter that 'the recent past always presents itself as though it has been destroyed by catastrophes.'³ Five years later Benjamin says this of Klee's angel:

His face is turned towards the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.⁴

¹Kafka, *Diaries*, p.292.

²G. Peaker (1996), 'On Losing the Books', Unpublished MS, University of Derby, p.1. The title of Peaker's paper captures the loss of the tradition that formerly legitimated the theological perspective.

³T.W. Adorno (1980), 'Letters to Walter Benjamin', trans. Harry Zohn, in Adorno *et.al.*, *Aesthetics and Politics*, London: Verso, pp.110-133, p.112.

⁴W. Benjamin (1969), 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, pp.245-255, p.249. Helen F. Connell has pointed out to me that this account of the angel differs from Klee's image in certain interesting ways. For example, Benjamin produces an opposition between past/future which seemingly relies on a correspondence between the angel's front/back. Yet Klee's angel might be looking over its shoulder, disrupting

In Adorno's reading of Kafka, the possibility of a redemptive illumination of the rubbish-strewn and fallen world becomes an interpretative touchstone, even if at present only the gloomy first step towards such a redemption can be made - recognising the ubiquity of suffering. This gnostic recognition involves learning to see the repressed rubbish of history through the eyes of the artificial angel, a view which can recollect the horrors of history through an artistic identification with its human victims. These possess an estranged perspective on the world which persecutes them. Adorno makes reference to the inverted crucifixion of Jews in the middle ages:

[Kafka's] writing feigns a standpoint from which the creation appears as lacerated and mutilated as it itself conceives hell to be [...] Kafka, the land surveyor, photographs the earth's surface just as it must have appeared to these victims during the endless hours of their dying.¹

Kafka lights up the possibility of something different only through unshrinking attention to the dark side of what is: 'The light-source which shows the world's crevices to be infernal is the optimal one.'² These days, it the concentration camp which is infernal after the manner of an inverse crucifixion. Jay notes: 'it was, of course, a reverse messianism, that of the devil rather than God, which allowed [Adorno] to speak of "after Auschwitz" with almost the same portentousness that a Christian would speak of AD.'³ But if sudden negative breaks in history are possible,

the linear dichotomy. Given Benjamin's 'conception of the present as "the time of the now" which is shot through with chips of Messianic time' (p.255), the textual disruption may well be a deliberate mimesis of the angel's contorted posture.

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.269.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.269.

³Jay, *Adorno*, p.108.

perhaps their opposite is too: 'messianic incursion could have its benign side, the redemptive moment that Benjamin had cherished and Adorno never fully abandoned.'¹ The angel's eyes therefore force reflection on the fate of a world suspended between heaven and hell: 'The machine angel's enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it.'²

It is attention to the greyness of the commodity world that produces glimpses of another colour.³ Adorno uses Kafka to bolster his own renunciation of practical politics in favour of carrying through this melancholic theoretical labour of the negative. Adorno approvingly quotes Kafka's aphorism 'Our task is to do the negative - the positive has already been given us.'⁴

Adorno relates his quasi-messianic reading of Kafka to certain Freudian insights, perhaps because hope for a different life is immanent to Freud's unattainable utopia of the reconciliation of warring mental currents. The hidden war in the mind is revealed and alleviated through paying proper attention to the disastrous pain that betrays it, not by phantasing about what salvation might be. This refusal to phantasise about psychological utopia actually keeps the power of its possibility, by leaving a space empty of premature speculation in which the possibility might freely develop. According to Adorno, Marx also makes room for the truly transforming possibility of a new life born of eternal peace through his resistance towards 'positive blue-prints for socialism.'⁵ Such blueprints usually reduce utopia to current ideas of pleasure; ideas stained by current social pressures. These bans on producing images of a

¹Jay, *Adorno*, p.108.

²Adorno, 'Commitment', p.194.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.377-378.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.271 and F. Kafka (1994), *The Collected Aphorisms*, trans. M. Pasley, London: Penguin, p.8.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.156.

psychological or social utopia are in some sense a secular equivalent of the Jewish ban on naming or depicting God, and in Adorno this prohibition becomes a way of understanding the subject-object dichotomy itself:

A body of ideas would substitute for the object of cognition, and the subjective arbitrariness of such ideas is that of the authorities. The materialist longing to grasp the thing aims at the opposite: it is only in the absence of images that the full object could be conceived. Such absence concurs with the theological ban on images. Materialism brought that ban into secular form by not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured.¹

For all their secularism, Freud, Marx and Adorno therefore continue in their own manner an investigation into some of the great problematics of Jewish thought. In Section VII, I explore some of the political limits of Adorno's resolutely negative messianic horizon, but for now I continue to develop the link between psychoanalysis, the Jewish tradition and Kafka's work.

In his recent essay on Kafka, George Steiner reinforces the link, noting somewhat sarcastically that psychoanalysis is a 'current Judaic derivative', a 'parodistic or bastard' version of the Judaic tradition.² But by using a phrase of Freud's to characterise Kafka's inheritance of the Jewish tradition, Steiner also implicitly registers the direct influence of Freud on Kafka: 'Franz Kafka was heir to this [Jewish] methodology and epistemology of commentary, of "unending analysis" (Freud's phrase).'³

Reading between the lines of Adorno's idiosyncratically Freud-Marxist reading, we could say Kafka's ghastly representation of the everlasting repetition of myth-become-nightmare shows up the hidden

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.207

²G. Steiner (1996), 'A Note on Kafka's "Trial"', in *No Passion Spent*, London: Faber and Faber, pp.239-252, p.240-241.

³Steiner, 'A Note on Kafka's "Trial"', p.241.

side of a frozen history. Blocked from maturation, history regresses, repeating its problems at new levels of complexity, just as the personal horrors of neurosis or psychosis involve immature fixations which determine an eternal and dominating return of the repressed. Illuminating these historical fixations also lights up the possibility of something different. These Freudo-Marxist theories can all be read as secularised versions of originally religious themes of a sinful fall, and a concomitant hope of redemption.

This moment of negative theology in Benjamin and Adorno finds much to work with in Kafka, whose writing can be read as a sustained engagement with Jewish mysticism. Themes of guilt, alienation and redemption dominate Kafka's work. According to Steiner, who identifies Benjamin's reading of Kafka as the exception to the rule that commentary on Kafka always falls short of the mark, Kafka inherited the 'arcane wit, the delicacy of probing, the finesse of Talmudic, of Midrashic and Mishnaic commentaries.'¹ Steiner goes further than this, and further than Benjamin, with the daring assertion that Kafka's parable 'Before the Law'² is worth taking as an addition to the Jewish sacred canon, 'as being informed by revelation.'³

The parable tells of a man forbidden access to the Law by a doorkeeper. The doorkeeper dissuades the man from entering, talking of a series of doorkeepers, each worst than the last: 'The third doorkeeper is already so terrible that even I cannot bear to look at him.'⁴ But the doorkeeper offers no resistance to the man, who is nevertheless intimidated, waiting all his life outside the door. As he dies, he becomes aware with his fading vision of the radiant light streaming from it.

¹Steiner, 'A Note on Kafka's "Trial"', p.240.

²In Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, pp.3-4 and also in *The Trial*, pp.235-237.

³Steiner, 'On Kafka's "Trial"', p.250.

⁴Kafka, 'Before the Law', p.3.

The doorkeeper recognises that the man has reached his end, and, to let his failing senses catch the words, roars in his ear: 'No one else could ever be admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it.'¹

Steiner provides a theological interpretation which helps flesh out the questions raised in the parable about the relation between the blinding angelic optic used by Kafka and our mundane vision:

The Trial is translucent, it stands open to our apprehension as do biblical parables and narrations. If we remain baffled and rebellious to the light of meaning - a light which may well be inhuman in its indifferent purity - if we do not enter a door open and intended for each and every one of us, the guilt, the consequences are ours. Or to put it simply: it is not so much we who read Kafka's words, it is they who read us. And find us blank.²

Whereas Steiner has to take refuge in the notion of revelation to support his contention that Kafka's parable is translucent, Adorno follows a different track, a more materialist one, interpreting the opaque power illustrated by the story as an equivalent of Freud's theory of hierarchical taboo.³

Nevertheless Adorno, like Steiner, adopts Benjamin's definition of Kafka's writing as parable,⁴ and when Adorno remarks that 'Kafka's prose sides with the outcasts,'⁵ those at the bottom of the hierarchy, it is hard to avoid the inference that there is something Christ-like about Kafka's sympathetic artistic and personal reproduction of alienated suffering. As a Jew in Christendom, Kafka is like a Christian in Israel. However, just as

¹Kafka, 'Before the Law', p.4.

²Steiner, 'On Kafka's "Trial"', p.251.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.250.

⁴Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p.124.

⁵Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.246.

the young Adorno gave up his flirtation with his mother's Catholicism (but behaved like a martyr all his life), Kafka in the end refused to play the Messiah (but sacrificed his happiness anyway). 'Kafka was a writer of parables, but he did not found a religion.'¹ Adorno takes this refusal as a critique of the directly messianic pretensions of dialectical theology, against interpretations of Kafka which simply seek to turn him into a prophet (as Steiner almost does). Kafka's angel is artificial. This confirms that Adorno's messianism remains firmly secularised. Adorno makes it clear that his belated interest in the Jewish tradition is programmatic, not devotional (or even expert). Following Benjamin's interest in the rational telos of Judaism,² Adorno seeks to place both that tradition and Kafka in the service of an enlightened enlightenment, not to lose himself in negative theology or mysticism:

Kafka reacts in the spirit of the enlightenment to its reversion to mythology. He has often been compared to the cabbala. Whether justifiably or not can be decided only by those who know that text. If, however, it is true that, in its late phase, Jewish mysticism vanishes and becomes rational, then this fact affords insight into the affinity of Kafka, a product of the late enlightenment, with antinomian mysticism.³

As in the antinomian mystical tradition sublated in Kafka's work, and as in Benjamin's similarly amoral search for the power of the profane, the production of new experiences is still part of Adorno's process of pursuing artistic extremities. In the same way that Schoenberg's once shocking music 'requires the listener spontaneously to compose its inner movement and demands of him not mere contemplation, but *praxis*,'⁴

¹Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p.126.

²An interest perhaps influenced by the 'cultured universalism' of Hermann Cohen. See Roberts, *Walter Benjamin*, p.45-47.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.268.

⁴Adorno, *Prisms*, p.149-150.

Kafka's prose forces critical engagement by refusing to unlock its negative allegory for the reader - Kafka's is 'a parabolic system the key to which has been stolen.'¹

The Greek root of the notion of parable is *parabole*, 'a setting alongside.' The usual idea of parabolic analogy is for the allegorical significance to be obvious, allowing the transposition of insight from a surface truism to a parallel, yet supposedly deeper, moral and spiritual level. Christ's parable of the grain that fell on stony ground, when set alongside the experience of his brethren, could be easily recognised as a theory of the subjective dimension involved in the reception of religious truth. To continue the theme of illumination, as the term 'parabolic' itself invites, we could say that the parable puts familiar terrain in a new, transparent and highly focused light. Steiner pushes this notion to its limit by suggesting that Kafka's parables *are* transparent, but *seem* obscure because our eyes are lacking. There is an aphorism of Kafka's which confirms Steiner's interpretation: 'With the strongest of lights one can dissolve the world. For weak eyes it becomes solid, for weaker eyes it acquires fists, for eyes still weaker it becomes shamefaced and smashes him who dares to look upon it.'²

Adorno's reading is similar to Steiner's, but more closely follows Benjamin's observation that Kafka 'took all conceivable precautions against the interpretation of his writings.'³ Adorno maintains that Kafka does generate a parabolic sense of recognition, referring to his famously "everyday" style, but simultaneously undermines the possibility of identifying its meaning, referring to the mounting feeling of unreality forced on the reader by the content of what is so matter-of-factly described. Kafka lays his allegory alongside the everyday world, but does not himself

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.246.

²Kafka, *The Collected Aphorisms*, p.13.

³Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p.124.

provide the link between the two. No theological key unlocks Kafka's parables - they are 'damaged.'¹ Kafka's wavelength remains opaque to our eyes, despite the fact that we recognise something in it, yielding a tension that may provoke in the reader an uncanny shift of perspective. The reader has to try and make sense of the shadows cast by the dream-filters Kafka places in the way of the sunlight of reason: 'Each sentence says "interpret me", and none will permit it. Each compels the reaction, "that's the way it is", and with it the question, "where have I seen that before?"; the *déjà vu* is declared permanent.'²

Part of the *déjà vu* is like the dazzlement produced by the unnaturally bright glare of the parallel waves of a light beam ordered by a parabolic reflector. Caught in Kafka's headlights, we feel plunged into darkness as our spiritual photoreceptors burn out. Paralysing spots swim before our eyes - from which visions could come.

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.126 Miriam Hansen discusses other variants of Adorno's theme of puzzles with no solution, in her paper 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing: Adorno, Derrida, Kracauer' in *New German Critique*, no. 56 Spring-summer 1992, pp.43-75, esp. p.57 where she quotes some remarks of Adorno's on art as a hieroglyph with a lost code.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.246.

IV: Messianic Psychoanalysis.

Hinting at Freudian theory, for which nothing is an accident, Adorno suggests attention to the evanescent detail of Kafka's writing shows an order underlying the flow of hallucinatory prose. Just as Freud was concerned to take seriously what others dismissed as the nonsensical content of dreams and parapraxes, Adorno is receptive to art emanating from a revolutionary concern for the products of the unconscious. That Adorno says of Kafka 'surrealism can rightfully claim him,'¹ is surely significant in this regard.

Although the surrealists repudiated religion, they were very much concerned with the experience of the divine and the ecstatic, and their demonic counterparts. Surrealism certainly worked within a quasi-messianic horizon, even if this was conceptualised in an ostensibly profane manner. The theoretical explorations of Freud and Otto Rank into mythology, history and religion provided the surrealists with a framework for their vivid artistic free associations. These modern psychoanalytic sensibilities allowed the surrealists to blast a new symbolic highway through the artistic landscape of the day. Ernst's earliest paintings are dominated by strange phallic figures on the borderline between machines and living creatures - similar artistic territory to the realm of the artificial angel in Kafka's work. However, Adorno is scathing about the reduction of surrealism to psychoanalytic symbols and universal complexes, preferring to use psychoanalytic concepts at a deeper level to unpack the surrealists exploration of the libidinization of the commodity form through the recovery of a different form of childhood experience: 'one may assume that the affinity with psychoanalysis lies not in a symbolism of the unconscious but in the attempt to uncover childhood experiences by

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.246.

means of explosions.'¹ Unpacking the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's reading of Kafka shows how he breaks through the shallow use of Freud to something more sophisticated. Nevertheless, Adorno does make some pretty standard psychoanalytic interpretations, showing that he can play this particular game as well as anyone else, before changing the rules somewhat. Before moving onto Adorno's efforts, it is therefore worth briefly establishing the kind of approach adopted by two other theorists interested in applying Freud to Kafka.

These interpretations of Kafka confirm that a use of Freudian symbolism and Oedipal imagery, familiar from traditional psychoanalytic interpretations of surrealism, lies behind the religious themes identified by more theologically inclined Kafka critics. For example, Charles Neider was 'soon forced to conclude that Kafka had applied Freud's dream findings deliberately.'² Neider provides long lists mechanically cataloguing practically all the objects which appear in *The Castle* as Freudian symbols of either male or female derivation, before moving on to decode the whole narrative as an Oedipal myth. Heller³ puts together a more subtle psychoanalytic reading of Kafka's short story 'The Judgement',⁴ which portrays a young man's struggle with his father, and his eventual suicide. As Heller notes, the story is packed with Oedipal themes of envy and castration anxiety. For example, the son notices his

¹T.W. Adorno (1991), 'Looking Back On Surrealism', in *Notes to Literature, Volume One*, pp.86-90. My attention was drawn to this paper after this thesis was passed, through my reading of Shierry Weber Nicholsen (1997), *Exact Imagination, Late Work: On Adorno's Aesthetics*, Cambridge MA.: MIT Press, esp. pp.197-199. A thorough engagement with this erudite monograph would entail numerous small additions to my thesis, inappropriate now it has been examined. I instead allow myself this footnote and a few subtle modifications of this section.

²C. Neider (1969), 'The Castle: A Psychoanalytic Interpretation', in P.F. Neumayer, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of The Castle*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, pp.40-45, p.40.

³Heller, *Kafka*, pp.13-50, esp. pp.21-22.

⁴In Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, pp.77-88

aged father 'is still a giant of a man'¹ as his dressing gown flaps open. As if to indicate that a Freudian reading of such comments is not over-interpretation, Heller informs us that Kafka's reflections after writing the story included 'thoughts about Freud, of course.'² Despite Adorno's unease about reductive uses of psychoanalysis, he also contributes to this well-established (if not over-established) academic industry devoted to Freudian Kafka-criticism.

For example, Adorno explicates Kafka's punning linguistic literalness with reference to Freud's theory of slips of the tongue. In *The Castle*, Sortini, a high official with an arrogant desire for sexual conquest hiding behind his dutiful actions,

is described as having remained 'at the nozzle' during the Fire Department party. The colloquial German expression for devotion to duty is taken seriously, the respectable person stays at the nozzle of the fire-hose, and simultaneously an allusion is made, as in parapraxes, to the crude desire which drives the functionary [...]³

For the English reader of the Muir translation of Kafka's novel, the phrase in question is elusive. The reason is that the German *Spritze*,⁴ which Adorno's translators Samuel and Shierry Weber render as 'nozzle' in the passage above, is given by the Muirs as 'fire-engine.'⁵ Both translations are technically correct, although the Webers have perhaps been influenced by Adorno's Freudian agenda, since 'nozzle' more clearly reveals the possibility of a psychoanalytic interpretation. The German word has a range of meanings, some of which are even more phallic than 'nozzle:' *Spritzen* means spray, squirt and so on. But the crucial

¹Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, p.81.

²Kafka, *Diaries*, p.213, entry for 23rd Sep. 1912.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.248.

⁴F. Kafka (1982), *Das Schloss*, Frankfurt: S. Fischer, p.300.

⁵F. Kafka (1986), *The Castle*, trans. W. & E. Muir, London: Penguin, p.180.

information needed by the English reader is that *Spritzen* is actually a German expression for ejaculation. Adorno's connection of this with a colloquial expression on the subject of duty seems not to work in English, until one recalls the phrase 'to man the pumps,' which does indeed capture the feeling of duty alongside a phallic connotation (as in 'love-pump'). This English expression could perhaps have been the basis for a better translation than 'at the nozzle,' which loses the possibility of a natural English reading. But no English can capture the ease with which *Spritze* acts as a psychoanalytic switch-word connecting innocent actions with erotic violence. In *The Castle*, Sortini makes horribly overbearing sexual overtures in a letter he writes to Amalia, a young woman he met at the fire department party, beside the fire-engine. Her refusal leads to the downfall of her family. With the German for fire-engine being a potential equivalent for 'ejaculator,' and given the subsequent development of the plot, Adorno's compressed Freudian reading is certainly not an over-interpretation.

Similar translation problems dog some of Freud's interpretations of dreams and slips. Because the patterns of association dominant in the unconscious are witty,¹ and because psychoanalysis reveals many colloquial expressions and jokes to be products of the unconscious, some of Freud's most convincing interpretations rely on puns and phrases particular to the German language. The English translations of Freud are therefore dotted with footnotes explaining that such and such a phrase has such and such a resonance in German, just as I have had to do with Adorno's application of Freud's ideas.

Nevertheless, Adorno's application of the theory of parapraxes, replete with basic Freudianisms such as the importance of unconscious

¹See the editor's introduction to S. Freud (1905), *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (PFL 6), p.34-36.

colloquialisms and hidden desires, operates at an aesthetic level, not a clinical one. The pun Adorno treats as a slip is consciously deployed in Kafka's description, so is not strictly speaking a slip at all, or even a representation of one. Adorno is therefore crediting Kafka with the conscious appropriation of unconscious mechanisms, although not as explicitly as Neider's crediting of Kafka with a conscious deployment of Freud's theory of dreams. Adorno challenges anti-psychoanalytic readings of Kafka, sniping at dogmatic Marxist critiques of Freud. Adorno even suggests Kafka's own downplaying of psychoanalysis was disingenuous:

His words, ['never again psychology!'], are well known as is his remark that everything of his could be interpreted psychoanalytically except that this interpretation would in turn require further interpretation *ad indefinitum*; yet neither such verdicts, nor the venerable haughtiness which is the most recent ideological defence of materialism, should tempt one to accept the thesis that Kafka has nothing to do with Freud.¹

Reading Kafka through a socially sensitive psychoanalytic aesthetic of the unconscious can actually be politically more astute than unreconstructed Marxist reductions, which miss the depth-dimension of the sexual politics in his work.

This dimension is also lost in certain theological readings of Kafka, although they do at least focus on the appropriate material. For example, since theologians generally follow Max Brod in interpreting Kafka's impenetrable castle as the kingdom of God, there are those² who read Amalia's refusal of Sortini's crude sexual advance, and her subsequent

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.250. [Kafka translation changed in line with Kafka, *The Collected Aphorisms*, p.22]. At times, Adorno's own critiques of psychoanalysis are venerably haughty and disingenuous, given that he almost always goes on to use Freud's concepts.

²H. Tauber (1969), 'K. and the Quest for God in Life', in P.F. Neumayer, *Twentieth century Interpretations of The Castle*, pp.36-39.

punishment, as a sinner's refusal of the difficult path ordained by God and her concomitant fall from grace. In this dubious reading, Amalia seems to me to be portrayed as a sort of failed female Abraham. Abraham must sacrifice his son, and finds redemption in his willingness. Amalia is asked to sacrifice her virginity, and finds perdition in her refusal. Eschewing such readings, and reaching the social dimension other uses of Freud fail to reach, Adorno's psychoanalysis of Sortini's 'crude desire'¹ eventually leads to the 'true secret' of patriarchal society: 'that of direct, barbaric oppression. Women are reified as mere means to an end; as sexual objects and as connections.'² Adorno connects his account of Sortini and Amalia with the situation in the Third Reich, where 'girls were not permitted to refuse medal-of-honour winners.'³ Such social elements always emerge out of Adorno's psychological analysis. He insists on the psychological depth dimension of social relations, but takes those relations as the deepest element of psychoanalysis.

Yet Adorno's materialist application of psychoanalysis also allows the prophetic-messianic moment in Kafka to persist, even in the sphere of depersonalised sexual relations: 'in the gloom Kafka gropes for an image of happiness.'⁴ Adorno identifies such an image in the flashes of an erotic utopia which glimmer through the cracks which scar relations between the sexes. In *The Castle*, K. and Frieda find a moment of joy in the most difficult of circumstances:

the hours which the two spend lying together 'in little puddles of beer and other garbage which covered the floor', are those of fulfilment in a world so foreign that 'even the air did not have a particle of the air at home.'⁵

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.248.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.263.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.263.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.263.

⁵ Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.264.

Theologians also take note of such passages in Kafka, but tend to over-spiritualise them. For example, Tauber identifies such relationships in Kafka's work as attempts, by

becoming one with the girl, to let the powers of love which touch the divine and intensify and deepen the whole inner being serve the advantage of his struggle for the depth of his own existence, for his connection with the divine foundation.¹

This reduces these sexual relations in Kafka's work to a male attempt at transcendence aimed towards God, whereas Adorno seeks to capture a sense of 'ecstatic masculine gratitude' to woman herself in the 'hermetically secluded subject's incredulity at the paradox that it can be loved all the same.'² Either way, these readings both stretch Kafka somewhat. The passage describing the lovemaking is far from utopian: the comment about air involves a feeling of suffocation, and K. seems happiest pre and post-coitus.³ He seems to crave maternal closeness more than intercourse.⁴

However, that any happiness is attached to this lovemaking under the nose of Klammm, the father figure, shows how desperately alone K. feels. The fear and lack involved in the encounter are, I think, taken by Adorno as a marker of the chance of something better. Adorno's hints at a sexual utopia are meant to overcome the theological sublimation of sexuality using a social dialectic which conserves the messianic promise through a strict attention to the social repression of the body: 'At its most

¹Tauber, 'K. and the Quest for God in Life', p.38.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.263.

³Thanks to E. Boa for pointing this out.

⁴ This could be the explosive and painful release of infantile experience which Adorno sees as the basis for the affinity between psychoanalysis, surrealism and Kafka.

materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. Its great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh.¹

This potent image directly follows Adorno's explanation in *Negative Dialectics* of his materialist adoption of the Jewish ban on graven images, and seemingly acts as an immediate transgression of that ban. Adorno demonstrates that the unfolding of immanent critique cannot after all dispense with a transcendent moment. Adorno recasts Hegel's transgression of Kant's ban on renting the curtain between the phenomenon and the noumenon. Knowledge of a limit is already the image of its supersession:

No immanent critique can serve its purpose wholly without outside knowledge, of course - without a moment of immediacy, if you will, a bonus from the subjective thought that looks beyond the dialectical structure.²

Whereas Freud generally chooses to abandon the Jewish tradition of yearning for an utterly different "beyond" in favour of a pragmatic therapeutic stance, adjusting people to their wounds, the messianic moment with which Adorno leavens his psychoanalysis keeps the historical horizon open, daring to hold onto the image of a utopia in which no wounds are inflicted. But the ban on images is maintained as it is broken, in that the hesitant notion of a beyond is only generated by dwelling on the negative. The transitory and furtive nature of K.'s night among the rubbish with Frieda reveals the depth of the pain that often betrays pleasure in the end, but the strange taste of a different air nevertheless breeds a hope for new lungs to breath it, breaking the suffocating spell of degraded erotic relations.

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.207.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.182.

Adorno's preferred moments of Freud, such as the openness to hopes for a different future that sporadically surfaces in *Civilisation and its Discontents*,¹ actually come close to this. Pleasure is for Freud largely negatively defined as the absence of the unpleasure produced by the frustration of needs - a restrained metapsychological formulation that does not encumber its object with an ideological residue, yet one which still maintains a primary utopian impulse. This again revisits the Jewish ban on graven images.

Towards the end of my next section I discuss in more detail the relation of Freud's theory of masculine love to K.'s tortured erotic life. Overall, these Freudian moments intertwine in Adorno with Marxian and Nietzschean speculations on the chance of a new type of subjectivity, born from a state beyond the satisfaction of libidinal-material needs: 'Only if the physical urge were quenched would the spirit be reconciled and would become that which it only promises while the spell of material conditions will not let it satisfy material needs.'²

This is how Adorno absorbs the notion of a messianic change into his critical theory of society. The quasi-messianic themes in Adorno, like the deep psychoanalytic ones, only emerge through a cunning transgression of his own ban on directly invoking them. Apparently profane matters of the body carry what is left of the holy. There is no actual Messiah or Kingdom of Heaven to represent, so Adorno suggests that art and philosophy which seek to conserve the critical force of these concepts should look to their negatives: 'Religious art today is nothing but blasphemy.'³ The atheist carries the hopes of theology, and should not forget it.

¹Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.207.

³Adorno (1992), 'Theses on Art and Religion Today', trans. S.W. NicholSEN, in *Notes to Literature Volume Two*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp.292-298, p.294.

V: Kafka's Negative Montage of Psychosocial Waste.

Looking for negative imprints of messianic possibility, Adorno pursues Benjamin's identification of 'the outmoded' as one of the chief concerns of surrealism.¹ Surrealists were among the first to produce art from found objects, often detritus of one sort or another. Adorno gives that project a quasi-messianic twist, and an important role in his essay, by noting that in Kafka 'the obsolete is the stigma of the present.'² My interpretation of this gnomic formula is that if the obsolete is a holy mark, then the present is messianic. That is to say, it has the potential for bringing a new world into being. Exposing the stigmatic wounds of modernity, the dark writer reflects the blinding possibility of a different future, one in which no wounds are inflicted. The only things which truly register the failures of this world, whilst also registering a possibility of change, are the things worldly reason chooses to discard. In the right context, these discarded things can be artistically provoking. Perhaps the most shocking rubbish of all is the people deemed useless and sentenced to death, the victims of institutional murder. Adorno's notion that Kafka takes a snapshot of the world from the hellish viewpoint of a Jew hung upside-down for crucifixion suggests the idea of an inverted photograph, a negative. For Adorno, Kafka's snapshots are negatives of the truth.³ Adorno compares them to surrealist photomontages: 'The shock is like a surrealist arrangement of that which old photographs convey to the viewer.'⁴ The idea of a photographic negative of a montage of waste perfectly captures the theme of dialectical illumination. Adorno discusses

¹ Benjamin, 'Surrealism', p.181, and Adorno, 'Looking Back on Surrealism', p.88.

² Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.257.

³ Goetschel, 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', p.86.

⁴ Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.253.

the physical manifestations of waste that are so common in Kafka (such as redundant buildings and shabbiness), but his analysis of Kafka's reclaiming of psychological rubbish is of more importance here.

Adorno produces an aesthetically sophisticated interpretation of Kafka as a writer who blends the washed-out and obsolete dregs of modern experience into a montage hinting at other possibilities. This interpretation serves to differentiate Adorno's psychoanalytic reading of Kafka from the others I have discussed. Neider, and to a lesser extent Heller, apply the *contents* of Freud's theorems (Oedipus etc.), whilst neglecting the relevance of their more formal aspects. Adorno corrects this imbalance. For example, I have mentioned that Adorno's essay on Kafka uses the theme of the critical reappropriation of obsolete waste. This theme is not only deployed in the anal sense, as a good Freudian might immediately insist, but is more crucially a consistent adoption of the formal attention Freud pays to the mental refuse disposed of by the operations of a repressive reason acting according to the reality principle.

Adorno's Marxism supplements Freud's respect for the logic of what is usually discarded as the dregs, by following that logic all the way to the machine producing the refuse: society. The dilapidated accused who inhabit the dusty corners of the court waiting rooms in *The Trial*, sunk in their own misery and rendered ugly by suffering, could be understood as the discarded rubbish of the legal-bureaucratic machinery. This insight can be transposed to various levels. The legal bureaucracy is an allegory of the dream of reason, and as in Goya's infernal etching, the dream produces the ugly creatures of nightmare. Viewed through Adorno's Freudo-Marxist prism, Kafka's horrid dream-world emerges as the latent psychological truth behind the cheerful manifestations of modernity, in the same way that the shabby is to be found just round the corner from the plush whose concept demands its exclusion.

According to Freud, psychoanalysis devotes its attention to the 'dregs of the world of appearances'. He is thinking of psychic phenomena, parapraxes, dreams and neurotic symptoms. Kafka sins against the rules of the game by constructing art out of the refuse of reality. He does not directly outline the image of the society to come - for in his as in all great art, asceticism towards the future prevails - but rather depicts it as a montage composed of waste-products which the new order, in the process of forming itself, extracts from the perishing present.¹

Part of the refuse which must be scavenged, transformed and rescued is the crumbling facade of an empty subjectivity, which is too compromised by its adaptation to irrational social demands to comprehend the connection between its strange inner life and its strained outer existence.

Adorno's essay accordingly analyses Kafka's prose using an aesthetic application of each of the types of Freudian dregs. I have already demonstrated this with regard to Adorno's analysis of Kafka's appropriation of the power of the parapraxis. Each type of dregs reveals what we might term a partial complex in Kafka's work. For example, the literary parapraxis led into the theme of sexual domination and a hope for something different. Other elements of Adorno's essay lead to the analysis of paternalistic hierarchy, authoritarianism, mental breakdown and so on. Putting together all these complexes into a constellational montage produces an image of Kafka as a sort of recording surface into which the sins of the world are etched, like the victims of the torture machine in Kafka's imaginary penal colony. Adorno, like Heller, uses Freud's psychoanalytic method as a way into Kafka that gets beyond the often confined scope of psychoanalytic literary criticism. Adorno's remarks on using dream logic as a way of interpreting Kafka's texts summarise his

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.251-252.

illuminating attention to seemingly marginal details: 'The attitude that Kafka assumes towards dreams should be the reader's towards Kafka. He should dwell on the incommensurable, opaque details, the blind spots.'¹

That this is Freudian advice can be confirmed with reference to *The Interpretation of Dreams*, where it is maintained that the indistinct or minor details of dreams are the most important, as their blurring and de-emphasis betrays the action of the dream-censor.² 'Precisely the most trivial elements of a dream are indispensable.'³ But Adorno, like Kafka, seeks to raise the aesthetic application of psychoanalysis above the level of reductive psychobiography, in which 'artists whose work gave uncensored shape to the negativity of life are dismissed as neurotics.'⁴ Such applications of psychoanalysis reduce 'artworks to crude thematic material, falling strangely short of Freud's own theory of the "dreamwork."⁵ These applications forget how the dreamwork manipulates far more than purely subjective material: above all, it has to deal with the impact of social reality on the individual. Subjectivising psychoanalytic approaches to aesthetics do not fulfil the potential of the theory, because they do not do credit to objective social factors, and are particularly indifferent to the laws of aesthetics and the history of art itself. All these are aesthetic equivalents to the extra-personal material worked over in dreams. So, Adorno's reference to dream logic, as with his application of the theory of parapraxes and other types of psychic dregs, is not a reduction of Kafka's work to Kafka's unconscious:

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.248.

²Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* PFL 4, pp.656-662. also see L. Zuidervaat (1991), *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory: The Redemption of Illusion*, Cambridge MA: MIT Press, p.129.

³Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* PFL 4, p.658.

⁴Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.8.

⁵Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.8. Also see 'Looking Back at Surrealism'.

Artworks are incomparably less a copy and possession of the artist than a doctor who knows the artist exclusively from the couch can imagine. Only dilettantes reduce everything in art to the unconscious, repeating clichés. In artistic production, unconscious forces are one sort of impulse, material among many others. They enter the artwork mediated by the law of form; if this was not the case, the actual subject portrayed by a work would be nothing but a copy. Artworks are not *Thematic Apperception Tests* of their makers.¹

Adorno does not want to trace the blind spots of Kafka's texts to his personality, but does follow an implicitly Freudian characterisation of the importance of the latent aspects of Kafka's work. Adorno finds some seemingly minor details of *The Trial* more interesting than the obvious sections: 'The fact that Leni's fingers are connected by a web, or that the executioners resemble tenors, is more important than the Excursus on the law.'² Adorno does not spell out immediately what these details mean to him, but forces the reader to apply the rest of his essay in order to arrive at their own interpretation. Adorno's essay is itself a montage of such condensed and fragmentary images. My reading of these two blind spots, bearing in mind Adorno's injunction to avoid subjective reductions, is that they hide certain important themes in psychoanalysis, as well as in critical theory.

Firstly, the figure of Leni, the advocate's nurse with whom K. becomes embroiled in a compulsive sexual relation, connects Adorno's remarks on the theme of depersonalised sex in Kafka to his consideration of Kafka's animal stories. Kafka's explorations of regression go back much farther than childhood, reaching into our animalistic phylogenetic inheritance. This archaic inheritance emerges once more as the revenge of a bloody nature that is only duplicated in the actions of the men who

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.9.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.248.

dominate it, while dreaming that they are escaping it. 'The flight through man and beyond into the non-human - that is Kafka's epic course.'¹

Adorno takes Kafka's prose as a store of insights into the cost of our development from beasts to men and back again. Kafka provides a record of a hidden side of the dialectic of enlightenment in a mode suggestive of a biblical account of the fall.

One cost of the domination of nature is alienation between the sexes. Men compel women to act the role of a natural force, actually a male phantasy, used to define the masculinity which supposedly transcends it.² My interpretation is that for Adorno, K.'s reactions to Leni's working class sexual attractions are those dictated by a male image of woman as repressed animality, placed under a taboo by repressive social mores. The supposed closeness of woman to animal is indicated by her webs, presumably a genetic throwback, as well as by other animal-like details, such as her smell, 'a bitter exciting odour,'³ or her tendency to bite. Adorno is undoubtedly drawing on Benjamin's identification of Leni as a prehistoric 'swamp creature.'⁴ The intersection of class, sexuality and human prehistory in the male imagination is of course Freudian territory *par excellence*. Freud provides a secularised version of the patriarchal theological landscape. Both are dominated by the confession of sin and the debasing of female sexuality, but both also have their particular modes of insight. The psychoanalytic and theological themes intersect in Freud's work on Judaism, in which the renunciation of Oedipal temptation founds both enlightenment (see Section II, above) and misogyny.

Freud's most famous contribution to the psychology of masculine sexuality, 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.252.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.95-96, and Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.111.

³Kafka, *The Trial*, p.123.

⁴Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p.130.

Love,¹ is a transposition of the much older religious dichotomy of wife and whore into psychoanalytic concepts. It goes a long way towards unlocking K.'s troubled masculinity. Adorno does not explicitly refer to this paper, but Freud's definition of the basic struggle of masculine love as a struggle to rejoin the affectionate and sensual elements of Eros which are broken apart through the Oedipus complex, provides the essential background to Adorno's fragmented discussions of sexuality:

There are only a very few educated people in whom the two currents of affection and sensuality have become properly fused; the man almost always feels his respect for the woman acting as a restriction on his sexual activity, and only develops full potency when he is with a debased sexual object.²

Horkheimer suggests that social demands on the family condition the harsh division between maternal and paternal authority which underpins the Oedipal situation. In such a situation 'the suppressed inclination towards the mother reappears as a fanciful and sentimental susceptibility to all symbols of the dark, maternal, and protective powers.'³

K. certainly demonstrates this susceptibility. K. finds glimmers of sensual fulfilment with women who have loved before, images of the once forbidden mother. Frieda in *The Castle* has been Kamm's mistress. Kamm, the unreachable authority figure, is identified by Adorno as an image of the father.⁴ But as a servant, Frieda is also an image of the debased object of love sought by men as an alternate outlet for the forbidden sexual-aggressive impulses towards the mother. The brief

¹S. Freud (1912), 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love', in Freud (1991), *On Sexuality* (PFL 7), pp. 243-261.

²Freud, 'On the Universal Tendency to Debasement', p.254.

³Horkheimer, 'Authority and the Family', p.120-121. There are some grounds for seeing the whole Frankfurt School as sharing this inclination.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.251. Even Adorno cannot avoid Oedipus all the time!

moments of happiness K. finds rolling around on the rubbish-strewn floor of the tavern with Frieda (see Section IV) are thus a fleeting and compromised image of the reconciliation of the two currents of masculine love.

More often in Kafka, the two currents are kept painfully apart. In *The Trial*, Leni's animalistic and promiscuous aspects take the debased image of sensual satisfaction to its extreme, yet the vacillating K. wants her to be true to him. On the other hand, K. negates the chance of love with the young lady Fräulein Bürstner by trying to force himself on her. The woman is ultimately debased whether she gives herself or not: 'society constantly casts woman's self-abandon back into the sacrificial situation from which it freed her.'¹

Freudian motifs can also help, though less comprehensively, in the interpretation of the second 'blind spot' picked out by Adorno. That the executioners in *The Trial* remind K. of tenors² seems incongruous. I am unsure of the significance of the musical reference. However, the executioners are described as well-dressed, plump, clean and respectable. Kafka refers to them as gentlemen. We could take this as a Freudian dream reversal - in the West, executioners are traditionally the lowest of the low, untouchable, usually portrayed as deformed or retarded, perhaps even hooded to protect them from the shame of breaking the first commandment.

The dream reversal has at certain points in history become a real nightmare: Kafka's image of the respectable executioner reminds one of the classically educated gentlemen-Nazis. Adorno talked once of the classical music the Nazis liked to play to drown out the screams of their victims. What we might clumsily call the becoming-respectable of horror

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.90.

²Kafka, *The Trial*, p.246.

is one of Adorno's enduring post-Auschwitz themes, often conceptualised using Freud's notion of the reaction-formation. The exaggerated image of a cultured executioner in a top-hat, for all that its paranoid absurdity smacks of subjective psychopathology, captures a shocking social truth.

In the next section, I develop Kafka's exaggerated preoccupation with psychopathological material, showing its inner link with the critique of society. Kafka dares to offer up his own mind, warts and all, as an artistic case study on the spiritual situation of the age. In this, he is well ahead of those who try to psychoanalyse him, instead of his work.

VI: Kafka's Schizoid Self-Dissection as Social Critique.

As I have suggested, from one historical perspective psychoanalysis may be considered as a rationalised product of the Jewish tradition. But Benjamin wrote of the secondary literature on Kafka that 'Both the psychoanalytic and the theological interpretations equally miss the essential points.'¹ This reflects the increasing attention Benjamin was paying to questions of historical development (or, rather, the lack of it). Adorno's consideration of Kafka's account of the dialectic of enlightenment follows Benjamin in this, but I have tried to suggest that Adorno's Freudo-Marxist mediation of the extremes of theological and psychoanalytical modes of Kafka-criticism through an attention to social factors (such as the position of women) is able to transcend the inadequacies of each extreme. Kafka 'snatches psychoanalysis from the grasp of psychology.'² The strength of Adorno's interpretation of Kafka is the way the social dimension is discovered within the psychological and theological extremes of Kafka's prose, not laid over the top of them.

This emerges clearly in Adorno's approach to another dominant theme of Kafka's: father - son relationships. If theologians are inclined to see God behind every father image in Kafka, and if psychoanalysts are inclined to see the father behind every image of God, then Adorno weds both psychological analysis and theology firmly to a critique of society. For Adorno, our images of both God and of our earthly fathers are ultimately determined by social relations, and the goal of secularising messianism is to change those relations. As Marx put it, 'after the earthly family is

¹Benjamin, '*Franz Kafka*', p.127.

²Adorno, '*Notes on Kafka*', p.251.

discovered to be the secret of the holy family, the former must then be destroyed in theory and in practice.¹

However, by the time Kafka and Adorno are writing, the negative decay of the bourgeois family is of more concern than the idea of its positive dissolution. Slater puts it aptly: 'The family is being not sublated but annihilated.'² Alluding to the Frankfurt School's earlier research on the disruption of male socialisation through the economic dismemberment of competencies once possessed by the father,³ Adorno writes of '*déclassés*, caught up in the collapse of the organised collective and permitted to survive, like Gregor Samsa's father.'⁴ Kafka's story *The Metamorphosis*⁵ is a portrayal of a salesman, the poor Gregor, who dares to experience himself as the infantile insect the paternalistic bureaucracy has made of him, and who can therefore work no more. Gregor's circumstances, especially his strained relations with his father after he has become a beetle, could be seen as being economically determined. Gregor's transformation is born of overwork as he tries to support his family after the collapse of his father's business. After Gregor's breakdown, his father is forced to return to work, to an exhausting job he feels is beneath him. Gregor gets rough treatment at the hands of this resentful father and, even worse, is wracked with the guilt of the failed breadwinner: 'At first whenever the need for earning money was mentioned Gregor let go his hold on the door and threw himself down on the cool leather beside it, he felt so hot with shame and grief.'⁶

¹K. Marx (1845), 'Theses on Feuerbach; trans. S. Ryazanskaya, in *Karl Marx: Selected Writings*, ed. D. McLellan (1977), Oxford: OUP, pp.156-158, p.157.

²Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School*, p.108.

³Horkheimer, 'Authority and the Family'. Also see my Chapter One, Section II.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.259.

⁵In Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, pp.89-139.

⁶Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, p.112.

Clinically, the schizophrenogenic factor in Gregor's case would be that he continues to idealise his father, who is the real parasite in this story of a beetle,¹ and never grasps the extent of his own unconscious hostility towards him. Hence the pertinence of Adorno's observation that 'Kafka's hermetic memoranda contain the social genesis of schizophrenia.'² The move from seeing the origin of madness in the monadic individual, to seeing it in the relationship between such individuals, is a psychoanalytic one. The Marxist telos of this Freudian logic is to also examine the relationships of production which structure family life.

Kafka's reflections on madness make of it a mode of social revelation. Kafka's sensitive psychology becomes an immanent critique of psychologism. Kafka demonstrated this by turning his own subjectivity into an object to be dissected, beating the social system to it through a conscious literary deployment of schizoid psychological defence mechanisms. These mechanisms can show up the mark class leaves on everyone - maybe even more effectively than abstract Marxist theories of reification and alienation:

The subject seeks to break the spell of reification by reifying itself. It prepares to complete the fate which befell it. 'For the last time, psychology' - Kafka's figures are instructed to leave their psyches at the door, at a moment of the social struggle in which the sole chance of the bourgeois individual lies in the negation of his own composition, as well as of the class situation which has condemned him to be what he is.³

To borrow for a moment the terminology of R.D. Laing, who was intimately familiar with Kafka's work, we could say that Kafka's

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.256.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.255.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.270.

aesthetically schizoid work 'petrifies'¹ itself in order to mimetically reveal a world set in stone. 'To turn oneself into a stone becomes a way of not being turned into a stone by someone else.'² Although I cannot discuss it here, it is worth noting that the other link between Adorno's essay on Kafka and Laing's work is Kierkegaard, who clearly grasped many of these mechanisms of psychological withdrawal. In *The Trial*, K.'s experience of the legal bureaucracy fosters such a withdrawal. When two people discuss with each other whether to help K. find a way out of the court, 'K. said nothing, he did not even look up, he suffered the two of them to discuss him as though he were an inanimate object, indeed he actually preferred that.'³

The petrified statue, K.'s fragile subjectivity, is constructively shattered by Kafka the writer in order to show the dire effect of the world in the patterns created by the rubble. Kafka's expressionist demolition job is to traditional literature what Schoenberg was to tonal music: 'By avoiding all musical effects, [Kafka's] brittle prose functions like music. It breaks off its meaning like broken pillars of life in nineteenth-century cemeteries, and the lines which describe the break are its hieroglyphics.'⁴ These pillars were often used to mourn a life broken off too early. Kafka's schizoid literary withdrawal from the world, which culminates in the wish for a fitting end, at least controls its own exclusion from life.

Adorno's 'Notes on Kafka' is packed with these erudite allusions to the psychology of schizoid states, not to cast aspersions on Kafka's sanity, but to highlight his profound grasp of the intertwining of social and psychological factors in states usually classified as purely personal psychopathologies. Adorno's reading of Kafka uses an aphoristic

¹R.D. Laing (1959), *The Divided Self*, London: Penguin, pp.46-49.

²Laing, *The Divided Self*, p.51.

³Kafka, *The Trial*, p.81.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.264.

understanding of social influences on child-parent psychology to relate the darkly repressive side of the Oedipal dynamics of childhood ontogenesis to the phylogenetic birth-pangs of humanity, which on this account are not over yet: 'the social principle of domination coincides with the psychological one of the repression of instincts both ontogenetically and phylogenetically.'¹

Kafka's work can be seen as an historically acute literary precursor of certain psychoanalytical currents developed through work with highly disturbed children:

at times the power of the images he conjures up cracks through their protective covering. Several subject the reader's self-awareness, to say nothing of the author, to a severe test: 'The Penal Colony' and 'The Metamorphosis', reports which had to await those of Bettelheim, Kogon and Rousset for their equals, much as the bird's eye photo's of bombed out cities redeemed, as it were, cubism, by realizing that through which the latter broke with reality.²

Adorno allows us to understand that Kafka's surrealistic expression, which seems to be a window providing a view into a disordered subject wracked by religious guilt, can be read as a perspective on the social world which produces that subject. I think that Adorno's interpretation of Kafka can be understood by reversing the valence of the following aphorism of Kafka's:

A piece like a segment has been cut out of the back of his head. The sun looks in and the whole world with it. It makes him nervous, it distracts him from his work, and moreover it irritates him that he should be the very one excluded from the spectacle.³

¹Adorno, quoted in Cook, 'The Sundered Totality', p.209.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.254.

³Kafka, *The Collected Aphorisms*, p.32.

When viewed through Adorno's prism, Kafka allows us to squint out of the angel's eyehole he cuts in his own head. He shows us the false whole, which for the sake of a play on the aphorism we could call "the society of the spectacle." As the centre of critical attention, Kafka feels left out - but gives his readers the perspective he denies himself, a perspective which may aid them to understand their own role as monadically psychological observers of social catastrophe.

In the long final section of this chapter, I explore some of the problematic elements of Adorno's attempt to carry out a similar project in the register of critical theory.

VII: Limits of Adorno's Quasi-Messianic Freudo-Marxism.

In this section, following Adorno's tactic of erecting a ban and then transgressing it, I allow myself to use some of the techniques of psychoanalytic biography so far ruled out as subjectivist, in order to approach the difficult question of Adorno's own psychological contradictions and their relation to his work. They may be summed up in advance by quoting an aphorism of Kafka's: 'Some deny the existence of misery by pointing to the sun; he denies the existence of the sun by pointing to misery.'¹

Identifying some of the limits of Adorno's theory necessitates considering 'Notes on Kafka' as part of the whole theoretical landscape mapped out by Adorno's intellectual activity. Exploring this landscape involves various forays into Adorno's theory, as well as into historical analysis and psychobiography, which take up a considerable part of this section.² These more universal questions about Adorno are periodically brought to bear on his particular reading of Kafka, a process which hopefully works as both a summary and a critique. Inevitably, the question of Adorno's resolute negativity becomes a central issue, together with the related question of whether Adorno can live up to his own messianic standards.

Adorno's secular theology runs the same risk as his disillusioned-yet-orthodox Marxism: the risk of creating a critical posture oriented on an absent subject. Adorno's Marxism became an increasingly negative affair, once the quiescent proletariat seemingly confirmed Nietzsche's diagnosis

¹Kafka, *The Collected Aphorisms*, p.35.

²Everybody trying to contextualise Adorno's theory against the backdrop of history and the constellation of personalities at the Frankfurt School is indebted to the work of Martin Jay and Rolf Wiggershaus. My account is no exception.

of the stunted mentality of the herd, rather than Marx's faith in the working class. Adorno talks of

the subjectless beings whom historical wrong has robbed of the strength to right it, adapted to technology and unemployment, conforming and squalid, hard to distinguish from the wind-jackets of fascism: their actual state disclaims the idea that puts its trust in them.¹

These remarks are contained within a section of *Minima Moralia* which was eventually removed from the text. The 'Editorial Afterword' from the Suhrkamp *Gesammelte Schriften*² suggests that the omissions were guided by structural considerations, such as Adorno's desire to avoid theoretical duplication. The section just quoted, 'Imaginative excesses,'³ certainly does cover thoughts on class which remain important in the final version of the text.⁴ Whether or not the removal of 'Imaginative excesses' was also prompted by the manner in which its more obviously Nietzschean critique of the herd contradicts other remarks in *Minima Moralia*, cannot be determined - but seems worth mentioning as a possibility. In the final version of *Minima Moralia*, Adorno generally reverses intellectual history to take Marx as a critic of Nietzsche.⁵ Whatever the reason, these remarks confirm that Adorno's Marxist modification of Nietzsche does not dispute his negative characterisation of the herd mentality (which also influences Kafka's accounts of crowds and bystanders, especially in *The Trial*), but simply recognises the role capitalism plays in its creation. Adorno's most trenchant attacks on

¹Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.13.

²Reprinted in Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.14.

³Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', pp.12-14.

⁴Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.25-30.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.43.

Nietzsche focus on the weaknesses of his alternatives to that mentality, rather than his portrait of it:

The psychologists' attack on their scapegoat, the herd animal, can be paid back with interest by a social critique of the superman whose freedom remains false, neurotically greedy, 'oral', as long as it presupposes unfreedom. Every 'image of man' is ideology except the negative one.¹

Adorno, whose debt to Nietzsche persists despite this Freud-Marxist repayment with interest (see my Chapter Four), accordingly finds himself without a revolutionary subject, or even a conception of one. The position is similar in Kafka; he provides no image of the superman, or even man - whom he depicts as falling apart. Yet Adorno still hopes that the cavalry, negatively defined, might come over the hill anyway:

What the rescuers would be like cannot be prophesied without obscuring their image with falsehood. What can be perceived, however, is what they will not be like: neither personalities nor bundles of reflexes, but least of all a synthesis of the two, hard-boiled realists with a sense of higher things.²

In a similar way, Adorno's covert theology-without-a-God is a messianism with no concrete Messiah in prospect. Adorno even couples the two tropes, using a parody of messianism to discredit the faith of those Marxists of the Cold War period who were still waiting for the rescuers to emerge from the Stalinist ruins of the Russian experiment:

Materialism comes to be the very relapse into barbarism which it was supposed to prevent. To work against this is not the most irrelevant among the tasks of critical theory; otherwise the old untruth will continue with a

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology, Part Two', p.84.

²Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.13.

diminished coefficient of friction and a more baneful effect. Subalternity increases, once the revolution has suffered the same fate as the Second Coming.¹

Of course, Adorno's intention is to provoke better ways of allowing the subaltern to speak against its betrayal, but the strict negativity of Adorno's method allows no positive enactment of this.

Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis conforms to this pattern. Adorno's Freud exposes the brittle rigidity of the crumbling bourgeois subject, rather than offering any programme for transcending it. Adorno mentions intractable 'pathogenic processes in early childhood which psychoanalysis diagnoses but cannot really change.'² The colonisation of psychological rationality by the demands of its adaptation to irrational social conditions compromises the reality-testing function of the ego, leading to a form of narcissism which cannot really be described as maladjusted.

All these negative figures emerge in Adorno's reading of Kafka: the melancholy presence of the absence of God, the utter sclerosis of social structures and the death of individuality. Adorno senses that Kafka's plunge into the depths of darkness humbles the inflated enlightenment pretensions of those modes of thought which idealistically posit subjects Kafka portrays as vanished: God, the individual and social revolution. This idealism still weighs down materialism, and Adorno points out the baggage: 'Idealistic majesty is the apocryphal imprint, a relationship which the texts of Kafka and Beckett glaringly illuminate.'³

Such patterns in Adorno's interpretations invite certain questions. Most importantly, if the originally postulated subject-objects of theology,

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.205.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.41.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.204.

psychology and historical materialism have vanished, why keep the theoretical constructs built around them, even negatively? It may not be enough to ironically record the slow dissolution of the possibility of emancipatory concepts, never mind actions, hoping the negative record might spur some contingently postulated future subject into a proper praxis.

On this hopeful model, Adorno's fragments of critical theory can be taken as a set of messages in a bottle awaiting a reader.¹ The same could be said for Kafka's blinding parables. The difference between us and this future reader is the difference between the ideal subject-objects of theology, psychoanalysis, Marxism, and their actuality. Kafka shows how an explicit search for God always drives one up against the limits of man, how a grasping desire for a state of sanity provokes madness, and how subjective impotence prevents social change even when the objective need for it is present.

Reflection on the gap between concept and actuality, the core of Adorno and Horkheimer's concept of enlightened enlightenment, is meant to pave the way towards closing it. Kafka's contribution is to turn the gap into an abyss in order to foster self-reflection through a sublimation of the vertigo produced by looking over the edge. A problem with Adorno's theory, as with Kafka's prose, is that by relying on the abyss left by the vanishing subject, the problem of bridge-building is of necessity relegated to the future. Kafka's bridge falls into the ravine, unable to bear the weight of the first wayfarer to jump upon it.²

Gazing into the abyss can be dangerously hypnotic, becoming a substitute for the conformist gratifications it was supposed to negate. Lukács once testily complained that the Frankfurt School had taken up

¹Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.5

²F. Kafka, *The Bridge*, in Kafka, *The Collected Short Stories*, pp.411-412.

residence in the Grand Hotel Abyss.¹ Although the ethic of praxis guiding Lukács had its own problems, his acerbic comment undoubtedly carries a certain force. The problem is captured in a dictum of Kafka's crucial to Benjamin and Adorno's interpretation of his work: 'There is infinite hope, but not for us.'² I have already discussed this dialectical irony sympathetically. It certainly tries to keep the historical horizon open to the promise of messianic Marxism despite the depressing horrors of the present.

But the self-sacrificial posture of the dictum, whilst perhaps authentic in the case of Kafka, emerges as megalomaniacal in its repetition by Adorno. A simple psychoanalytic reversal - justified by certain "difficult" aspects of Adorno's character, as well as by his covert contempt for the herd - suggests that what it means from his mouth is that there is no hope for *them*, the actually existing proletariat, and that *we* critical theorists are the ones lucky enough to see it, conserving the possibility of something else on their behalf. 'Criticising privilege becomes a privilege - the world's course is as dialectical as that.'³ Unpacking this reveals a kind of "Messiah-complex" in Adorno. In Adorno's eyes the conservation of the dialectic through the production of polished philosophical texts was his world-historical task. Of course, any professional intellectual is vulnerable to attacks based on their privileges or esoteric subject matter, but not all intellectuals adopt stances of semi-sacred isolation.

Adorno could hardly imagine abandoning theory for praxis, even maintaining in a post-war letter to Marcuse that he would have continued to focus on philosophy, even if the Jews were actually being murdered

¹V.P. Pecora (1991), 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', in *New German Critique*, no.53, pp.104-130, p.126.

²Adorno, 'A Portrait', p.230-231 and W. Benjamin (1969), 'Some Reflections on Kafka', in *Illuminations*, pp.141-146, p.144.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.41.

around him.¹ Marcuse accepted that meaningful praxis was completely blocked in pre-War Germany, but rejects Adorno's identical diagnosis of post-War Germany. Adorno's remark suggests that had he not been half-Jewish, and therefore *forced* to escape Germany, perhaps he would have chosen a path not unlike Heidegger's "post-rectorship" tactic of intellectual isolation (see Section III).

The context of Adorno's heated exchange of letters with Marcuse was the student protests of the sixties. Marcuse criticises Adorno's misguided and paranoid unleashing of the police onto a group of students holding a discussion in the Institute's buildings, which they probably never intended to occupy. Marcuse ironically plays (unknowingly?) on Adorno's Kafkaesque trope of a bodily-erotic desire for a different kind of air (see Section IV):

We cannot ignore that these students have been influenced by us (and not least by you) [...] We know (and they know) that the situation is not a revolutionary one, not even a pre-revolutionary one. But this situation is so horrible, so suffocating and humiliating, that rebellion against it forces you into a biological, physiological reaction: you can no longer bear it, you're suffocating and you have to get air. And this fresh air is not that of 'left-wing fascism' (contradiction in adjecto!), it is the air that we, or at least I, want to breath one day, and which is certainly not the air of the establishment.²

Problematically, while Adorno's theory is conceived as a productive act performed on behalf of those stripped of the capacity to perform it themselves, this stance sometimes relies on absolutising the fate of those on whose behalf the theory spoke. Adorno's work 'too often condemned the victims of the social structure it criticised; and it passed sentence on

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.634.

²Marcuse, in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.633-634.

those victims without making any attempt to address them.'¹ Attempts by these condemned subjects to speak for themselves, such as the admittedly naive and incoherent student protests, had to be coldly brushed aside to retain the value of the sacrosanct critical theory - which ran the danger of becoming an end in-itself.

Adorno relates his concept of theoretical coldness² to his preference for Freud's aloof therapeutic neutrality above the over-eager empathy offered by humanistic psychology and philosophy: 'Professional warmth, for the sake of profit, fabricates closeness and immediacy where people are poles apart.'³ This coldness is difficult to reconcile with Adorno's insistence that the negative dialectician must love his objects.⁴ Adorno does his best to turn his ambivalence into a dialectical insight - 'Wrong life cannot be lived rightly'⁵ - but a glib residue remains. Perhaps this psychological ambivalence has something to do with the tension between Jewish and Catholic themes in Adorno's quasi-messianism. Adorno identifies with both the wrathful judge and the loving redeemer, identifications which are manifested in his problematic responses to the students. In private, he empathised, but in public he tended towards the judgmental in order to protect the Institute's reputation. 'Adorno does not differentiate between judgement and love, or when he does, he defends the former.'⁶

Adorno's "tough love" seeks to help the subaltern by rubbing its nose in the mess oppression has made of it, a tactic with a hidden

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.245.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.26

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.60.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.191.

⁵Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.39.

⁶J. Benjamin, 'The End of Internalization', p.61. I share her feeling that Adorno duplicates aspects of the authoritarianism he diagnoses in others. In *The Authoritarian Personality*, high scorers are cold, and low scorers are warm. Her critique of coldness in Freud and Adorno is on p.61-63.

authoritarian component. He follows to the bitter end the quotation which begins Part Two of *Minima Moralia*: 'Where everything is bad, it must be good to know the worst.'¹ Meant as a dialectically provoking over-corrective to the ubiquitous cultural discourses which seek to convince the mediocre they are special,² the unforgiving nature of Adorno's critique is at times an over-over-correction.

Worst of all for a critical theory which publicly urged the bourgeois subject to 'dissolve its composition,'³ in the eyes of Adorno and Horkheimer the production of worthwhile theory demanded the utmost private exploitation of the bourgeois freedoms they so trenchantly criticised. As Wiggershaus has revealed, this included the competitive exploitation of other people affiliated to the Frankfurt School. Adorno gained his position beside Horkheimer by unedifying manoeuvres carried out over years, which reveal the depth of his jealous hostility towards Marcuse, who was the only real rival for the post of theoretical *aide de camp* to Horkheimer. In 1935, before he was a full member of the Institute, Adorno assured Horkheimer,

If I had been in your position, and you in mine, I should not have hesitated to throw anyone out at all [from the Institute] if it meant being certain of you [...] Naturally I am referring here in particular to the position of Marcuse.⁴

This Machiavellian letter is worthy of one of Kafka's scheming functionaries, and this streak in Adorno's character infects his theory. He

¹F.H. Bradley, quoted in Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.83.

²Klee put it like this: 'Hatred of mediocrity out of respect for pure humanity.' See W.Grohmann (1954), *Paul Klee*, London: Lund Humphries, p.46.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.270.

⁴Adorno, in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.160.

is sharp enough to recognise some of this, but manages to pass the blame onto the academic system which makes such behaviour adaptive:

The circumstance that intellectuals have mostly to do with intellectuals, should not deceive them into believing their own kind still more base than the rest of mankind. For they get to know each other in the most shameful and degrading of all situations, that of competing supplicants, and are thus virtually compelled to show each other their most repulsive sides.¹

Psychobiography is always a dangerous pursuit, and Freud himself claimed, quoting Schiller again, that "'To blacken the radiant and drag the sublime into the dust" is no part of its purpose.'² Yet since Adorno seeks to blacken himself to blacken the world, it is important to follow his tactic closely, on the alert for the self-deceptions which creep into every self-analysis (including Freud's, of course). It is worth speculating that Adorno used his writing as a form of deeply self-critical confessional, just like Kafka. But confession may simply clear the conscience enough to allow further sin. Adorno's self-analysis, which takes his philosophy leagues ahead of writing which seeks to purify itself of personal themes, always lets him off the hook by blaming the world - a tactic Kafka never used. Adorno believes he has seen how horrid the world has made him, which becomes a rationalisation for channelling his authoritarian aggression into even less forgiving judgements of others.

At times Adorno adopts the lofty perspective on his objects he identifies as instrumental in the methods of science. This betrays the utopian impulse of *Negative Dialectics*: allowing objects to speak for themselves. Only by insisting his objects have been made dumb can Adorno dare to speak for them. If the dumb have also been made deaf, like

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.28.

²S. Freud (1910), *Leonardo da Vinci and a Memory of his Childhood*, in Freud (1990), *Art and Literature* (PFL 14), pp.143-232, p.151.

the oarsmen of the *Odyssey* whose ears have been plugged with wax,¹ then securing the space to theorise free from the demand to speak words others can understand becomes a moral imperative:

Since language cannot overcome its boundaries, reflecting only the conditions of the relations of production, it displays only what is untrue, reproduces only lies. What can be communicated is only its own negation, the fact of uncommunicability.²

Adorno's theory even implies the earplugged workers refuse to hear what could be communicated to them. When analysing the *Odyssey*, Adorno could have said that earplugs only muffle sound. Their effect must be supplemented by a subjective will-to-deafness, as anyone who has tried to use them to drown out a loud sound knows.

Goetschel claims Kafka's parable, 'The Silence of the Sirens',³ as a 'prototype' of negative dialectics, suggesting it is compatible with Adorno's reading of the *Odyssey*.⁴ Kafka twists the epic by suggesting the Sirens did not actually sing to Odysseus. Presumably, Goetschel takes their silence as the uncommunicable message of Adorno's dialectic, negative knowledge. But, for me, Kafka's silent Sirens have a subversive effect on Adorno's reading of the story. Adorno's position in that reading is of a guilty identification with Odysseus (the contemplative individual), who hears the song (enjoys art) by denying it to his crewmen (the workers who produce their master's time for contemplation). If there is no song (if the promise of culture is empty), then the oarsmen, who don't want to hear it anyway, might be closer to the truth. This reading also erodes the related

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.34.

²Goetschel, 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', p.92.

³Kafka, *Collected Short Stories*, pp.430-432.

⁴Goetschel, 'Kafka's Negative Dialectics', p.89.

content of Adorno's remarks on 'The Privilege of Experience' in *Negative Dialectics*:

If a stroke of undeserved luck has kept the mental composition of some individuals not quite adjusted to the prevailing norms - a stroke of luck they have often enough to pay for in their relations with their environment - it is up to these individuals to make the moral and, as it were, representative effort to say what most of those for whom they say it cannot see or, to do justice to reality, will not allow themselves to see. Direct communicability to everyone is not a criterion of truth.¹

The 'as it were' and the 'most of those' betray the self-conscious inadequacy of Adorno's claim to speak for the repressed aspects of well-adjusted conformists. He is content to state the negative. He does not make efforts to help his objects reflect on themselves; objects who, despite the supposed death of the individual, are in fact often subjects. If the subject has vanished, why write theory requiring one? Adorno's transcendent answer, had he dared to utter it, might have been "to conjure one up out of the future."

This messianic strategy risks confining the self-reflection of reason to a textual after-life falling far short of the original Frankfurt School commitment to an interdisciplinary theory in a liberating communication with the worker's movement. Wiggershaus appends some useful remarks to Adorno's statement in 1969 that:

'I attempt to express what I discover and what I think. But I cannot arrange this to suit what others can make of it or what may eventually become of it'. This did not exactly correspond to the concept of a Critical Theory capable of reflecting on its social function that had been developed by Habermas and, earlier, Horkheimer. [...] It was evidence of how close Adorno was to the position of an artist

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.41.

whose concern was his own autonomy, in spite of the complete impossibility of autonomy.¹

As Wiggershaus shows, even the large empirical projects carried out by the Institute to keep alive the dream of an interdisciplinary and emancipatory theory of society failed to deliver, although the money they earned certainly helped secure the Institute's autonomy. Wiggershaus suggests that the studies invariably ended up investigating the consciousness of the masses, without ever really trying to develop that consciousness by entering into a genuine dialogue with it. Even when conditions changed, Adorno never got beyond his wartime stance, as summarised in *Minima Moralia*, tied to it like 'Odysseus isolated at his mast: 'To adapt to the weakness of the oppressed is to affirm in it the pre-condition of power [...] For the intellectual, inviolable isolation is now the only way of showing some measure of solidarity.'²

The contradictions of this stance reached a peak when the Institute chose to support itself in post-war Germany by carrying out studies into the happiness of workers, not for the worker's movement, but for the factory owners.³ This could be contrasted with Kafka's more modest employment as an even-handed insurance clerk with a reputation for fairness when assessing claims for industrial compensation.⁴

The pioneering participant-observer group discussion methods developed in the studies of workers set the methodological trend for the focus groups now beloved of advertising executives and market researchers - a heavy irony given Adorno and Horkheimer's seminal critique of the culture industry. Despite his political unease about

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.621.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.26.

³Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.479-489.

⁴Heller, *Kafka*.

Horkheimer's use of such fundraising methods, Adorno was still to be found at conferences for industrial sociology or market research promoting the Institute's "front" as an expert consultancy service in matters of interdisciplinary methodology.¹ Adorno's own damning remarks from the 1940s stand as the best critique of this tendency: 'The procedure of the official social sciences is little more now than a parody of the business that keeps such science afloat while really only needing it as an advertisement.'²

Behind the business-like front of the Institute, Adorno laboured away at his "real" work, such as the essay on Kafka which has been my focus in this chapter. Perhaps Adorno saw such work as an end which justified various dubious means. Adorno made a theoretical point of being aware his work could claim no immunity to corruption by the pragmatic concern of maintaining the Institute's financial independence, but the contradictions involved were nevertheless acute. As is so often the case, Adorno's own theory can be turned against itself: 'devious tactics compromise the end they claim to serve, and thereby dwindle to no more than means.'³ Setting such passages against episodes like Adorno's pre-war political opportunism (see Section III), or his jealousy of Marcuse, brings the tensions out into the open. Adorno set exacting standards which illuminate his own failure - which is after all what *Negative Dialectics* sets out to do, waiting round the corner for its critics. This is important, because despite his various self-deceptions one convincing defence of Adorno is still to show how lucidly he himself grasped the contradictions under which he worked:

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.450-455.

²Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.11.

³Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.12.

Elitist pride would be the last thing to befit the philosophical experience. He who has it must admit to himself how much, according to his possibilities in existence, his experience has been contaminated by existence, and ultimately by the class relationship.¹

So whilst Adorno savages the masses, his caustic eye turns its baleful glare onto the smug intellectual, too. His damning passages about mass consciousness are always immediately counterbalanced by a condemnation of intellectual hubris. In the 'Antithesis' to the section of *Minima Moralia* which sanctions inviolable intellectual isolation, Adorno criticises his own concept of coldness:

He who stands aloof runs the risk of believing himself better than others and misusing his critique of society as an ideology for his private interest [...] His own distance from business at large is a luxury which only that business confers. This is why the very movement of withdrawal bears features of what it negates. It is forced to develop a coldness indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois.²

This dilemma of withdrawal, which runs the risk of becoming what it seeks to escape, is the dilemma of schizoid defence mechanisms, which Laing summed up by quoting Kafka:

'You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world, this is something you are free to do and is in accordance with your nature, but perhaps precisely this holding back is the only suffering that you might be able to avoid.'³

Adorno takes the rare step of advising on the most moral course of action for thinkers cognisant of these contradictions:

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.42.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.26.

³Kafka, in Laing, *The Divided Self*, p.78.

The only responsible course is to deny oneself the ideological misuse of one's own existence and for the rest to conduct oneself in private as modestly, unobtrusively and unpretentiously as is required, no longer by good upbringing, but by the shame of still having air to breathe, in hell.¹

The good intentions of such advice are rendered rather hollow by Adorno's Machiavellian narcissism, and his pursuit of the good life in America. Pollock wrote to Horkheimer in 1941, a few years before Adorno composed his remarks about modesty and shame: 'Teddie only has one interest in life, to become a minor gentleman of leisure on the west coast as soon as possible, and what happens to the rest of them is of no concern to him whatsoever.'²

Adorno publicly set such saintly standards for theoretical and personal self-reflection, he cannot help appearing all too human as details of his private life emerge. This is of course a universal fate, but Adorno's central theoretical project, to make of the splinter in his own eye a messianic eyepiece, asks for an immanent critique. Psychologically, Adorno's identification with Kafka has the qualities of a sort of masochistically self-deluding persecution complex. Of course, Adorno (like any exile, however reluctant) had reason enough to feel persecuted, and guilty. But one is nevertheless tempted to ask why his unease at having air to breathe in hell only gives rise to rather limp advice about personal self-restraint? Is this sort of material in Adorno's life and work an unconscious screen for his survivor's guilt, or perhaps a form of displaced regret for his political opportunism in pre-war Germany? The absolute nature of messianic standards - even negative ones - leads to

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.27-28.

²Pollock in Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.264.

exactly the type of projective rigidity Adorno aimed dialectics against, and ultimately this absolute turns against him.

Conscious of these weaknesses, Adorno is careful in his writing to avoid messianic claims about his own work, preferring to bring out these themes by championing other writers. Kafka is credited with the construction of the eye of the artificial angel. Benjamin intertwines theology and materialism to illuminate a fallen world. Adorno's negative theory can parasitically (he would say, symbiotically) absorb the pregnant aura produced by these other writers, whilst itself appearing as a more enlightened development.¹

Outside his published writings, Adorno is more candid about admitting he felt his own gaze on the world to be very special indeed. Hullot-Kentor quotes an interesting theoretical conversation between Horkheimer and Adorno. Horkheimer is trying to pin down Adorno's metaphysics:

Horkheimer: You never say anything about the positive object of negative theology, yet you leave no doubt that such a theology exists....

Adorno:....I have no secret doctrine. I believe, however, that I have an eye for picking up from things the reflection of a source of light that could not be the object of intentions and thoughts.²

This certainly places Adorno closer to the artist-savant than to the social scientist. The resonance with Kafka's writing and the theme of quasi-messianic illumination is clear. For Adorno, the source of the reflected light is a future redemption of humanity, not God. Adorno obviously feels an affinity for Kafka's enigmatic status as a psychological

¹A tactic now adopted by criticism of Adorno?

²R. Hullot-Kentor (1989), 'Back to Adorno' in *Telos*, no. 81 Fall 1989, pp.5-29, p.11-12.

"outsider," picking up spiritual wavelengths missed by others. Feeling close to the edge during a stay in America, Adorno concluded that 'faced with a choice between a paranoid fantasy about paranoid reality and the stupidity of healthy common sense, paranoia is still more productive.'¹

Adorno claims the idea of truth can only be maintained through consciously retaining the paranoid and obsessive exaggerations which he sees as essential to thought itself:

Flight from the *idée fixe* becomes a flight from thought. Thinking purified of obsession, a thoroughgoing empiricism, grows itself obsessive while sacrificing the idea of truth, which fares badly enough at empiricists' hands. From this aspect [...] dialectics would have to be seen as an attempt to escape the either/or. It is the effort to rescue theory's trenchancy and consequential logic without surrendering it to delusion.²

Ultimately, despite his adoption of messianic tropes which invite sceptical judgement and encourage a Manichean perspective, we have to follow Adorno on this and give up the urge to classify him according to the tempting psychobiographical either/or logic of saint vs. sinner. The critic's own hidden desire for saints breeds resentment for the all too human, and saints are actually those who perceive their own limits - not exactly what believers wish them to be.

However, having established some of the tensions involved in Adorno's theoretical stance, it is worth showing how they manifest themselves in 'Notes on Kafka.' Adorno's at times instrumental attitude to the (subject) objects of his theory surfaces in several symptomatic ways in the essay:

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.457.

²Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.11.

i. In its intricate literary character, its aura of the "ivory tower," the essay certainly raises the old debate about the aestheticisation of politics. Most baldly, some Marxists have suggested the whole project of Frankfurt School culture-critique is a sad retreat from the realm of actuality. Adorno may side with the outcasts, but in a coldly distanced way. This distance is meant to become proximity, but the Kafka essay itself could be seen as an archetypal example of out of touch "bourgeois Marxism." Such perspectives on Adorno revive a Lukácsian contempt for the allegedly nihilistic moments of modernism. From this sort of position, Adorno's peculiar reading of Kafka can be seen as neglecting a rich vein of directly social criticism, which is obscured behind Adorno's Freudian insistence that we forget the manifest content of the prose in order to foreground its deeper latent elements. Gillian Rose suggests that Adorno 'adapts Freudian concepts in a way which promises to be radically sociological, but which stops short at the point where those concepts might be transformed into a theory of socio-political action.'¹

Adorno does note that *The Trial* is a trial of the legal system, and in the fifth section of 'Notes on Kafka' he suggests Kafka's images of dilapidation reveal the innermost tendencies of monopoly capitalism. But Adorno does not develop these connections properly, simply alluding to general Frankfurt theories of late capitalism.² More interestingly, this section of the essay ends with some long quotes from Kafka which would have led one to expect more sympathy from Adorno towards the hopeless student protests which took place a decade after Adorno published the passages from Kafka. These passages insist on the possibility that 'new, young people' could come, 'ready to take up the struggle, ignorant, of course of what stands before them, yet in an ignorance which does not

¹Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p.141.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.256.

cause the observer to lose hope but rather fills him with awe, with joy, with tears.'¹

But when one of Kafka's characters invites others to join a surrealistic revolt with toy guns that will not be used, no-one wants to enrol. Adorno takes this pragmatic refusal of the invitation as the 'figure of the revolution in Kafka's narratives.'² Elsewhere, Adorno provides a further interpretation of this story, taking it as an example of the superiority of autonomous over political art:

This is not a time for political art, but politics has migrated into autonomous art, and nowhere more so than where it seems to be politically dead. An example is Kafka's allegory of toy guns, in which an idea of non-violence is fused with a dawning awareness of the approaching paralysis of politics.³

From our point in time this pacifist-absurdist drama of a toy gun revolution seems like a perfect precursor of the anarchic methods of the students Adorno had so much trouble with. Adorno rejected the possibility of traditional class-struggle, but also in the end rejected those closest to his own "outsider" position - the marginalised students who so eagerly consumed his writings. It is no wonder those students felt let down.

But Adorno never considered himself qualified to take part in programmatic politics, and there is a degree of honesty involved in his form of commitment: quasi-artistic pursuit of his philosophical muse, whatever the social circumstances raging about him. If he wouldn't have broken off theoretical work while the Jews were murdered around him,

¹Kafka, quoted in Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.258.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.258.

³Adorno, 'Commitment', p.194.

he certainly wasn't going to break it off to join the leftist students at their situationist happenings and picket lines.¹

Ironically, in one of the more obviously political sections of *The Trial*, neglected by Adorno in favour of following up more obscure and marginal blind spots, it seems as if Kafka actually comes to the same conclusions. This section could develop Adorno's idea that Kafka predicts the paralysis of politics. At K.'s first public interrogation, the crowd consists of numerous persons on the right side of the court, plus a few on the left. As the scene unfolds, Kafka capitalises the sides, and refers to them as the 'Left party' and the 'Right party.'² Kafka's political sympathies and doubts are made clear *via* this transparent device. Of those on the Left he says this:

These people of the Left party, who were not so numerous as the others, might in reality be just as unimportant, but the composure of their bearing made them appear of more consequence. As K. began his speech he was convinced that he was actually representing their point of view.³

But K. gives up his hope of swaying even the sympathetic side of his audience with his rhetoric, and instead adopts a more critically probing approach:

he no longer considered it necessary to get applause from everyone, he would be quite pleased if he could make the audience start thinking about the question and win a man here and there through conviction.⁴

¹Adorno regarded the demand to immediately unify theory and praxis as a 'prohibition of thinking.' See Adorno (1991), 'Resignation', in *The Culture Industry*, London: Routledge, p.172.

²Kafka, *The Trial*, p.48-49.

³Kafka, *The Trial*, p.49.

⁴Kafka, *The Trial*, p.51.

As the session continues, K. suddenly becomes suspicious of the whole audience, who all seem to be part of the same establishment, all wearing the same badges of office:

They all wore these badges, so far as he could see. They were all colleagues, these ostensible parties of the Right and the Left, and as he turned round suddenly he saw the same badges on the coat collar of the Examining Magistrate, who was sitting watching the scene with his hands on his knees.¹

Sections like this in Kafka conform before the fact to Adorno's refusal to theoretically commit himself to either camp of the cold-war political landscape forming the backdrop to *Negative Dialectics*, and also confirm Adorno's statement that Kafka's work 'has the tone of the ultra-left.'² Although Adorno has no problem supporting ultra-left literature, he was more hesitant about the similarly ultra-left students. For them, perhaps, the corruption of politics and law portrayed by Kafka could actually make room for the radical challenge of Adorno's deliberately unpragmatic Freudo-Marxist refusal to give up on the messianic promise of primary narcissism, suggesting it could still carry a degree of critical force by conserving a concern with matters entirely neglected by the political mainstream.

For all its merits, Adorno's Freudian policy of focusing on the latent content of Kafka's writing runs the same risk of needless obscurantism as the neglect of manifest content does in Freud's dream technique. This neglect is driven by the same concern for form (depth over surface) as Adorno's *penchant* for obscurity. Adorno, always obsessed with dazzling

¹Kafka, *The Trial*, p.56. According to E. Boa (1996), *Kafka: Gender, Class and Race in the Letters and Fictions*, Oxford: Clarendon, at this point the meeting becomes a parody of a synagogue, upsetting to the assimilated Christian K. While this interpretation opens up an interesting line of argument, I cannot consider it here.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.261.

his reader by convoluted refractions of the reflected light only he can see, sometimes neglects the obvious.

Kafka's manifest themes are often both politically and experientially acute, even by Adorno's standards. I suspect the real reason Adorno neglects them is that the direct nature of their allegorical element undermines Adorno's insistence on the gulf between parable and interpretation in Kafka, just as the importance of the manifest content of dreams may challenge the desire of the depth psychologist to dig ever deeper. Adorno undoubtedly duplicates Freud's selective approach to interpretation, and his selections are unsurprisingly informed by his own theoretical prejudices. This justifies the conclusion that whereas Adorno's fragmentary and iconoclastic Freudo-Marxist insights are among his strengths, Adorno's scanty theory of politics is certainly a weakness.

To continue the allegory of K.'s public interrogation, we could say that the effort to win over isolated individuals through artistic conviction has eventually to develop into a forum for deciding what those who have been won over should do, something neither K. nor Adorno ever addresses. It is almost as though Adorno's negative position is more secure if people refuse to agree with him. Could he be one of those who are 'wrecked by success?'¹ The students effectively said, "Yes, but what now?" Adorno could not even begin to answer, so he broke off the conversation. Perhaps he wisely had himself in mind when he wrote of 'hardboiled realists with a sense of higher things,'² well aware that he could be no-one's rescuer.

ii. In 'Notes on Kafka' the figure of repressed woman is actually a more important theoretical motor than the question of class-

¹S. Freud (1916), 'Some Character-Types met with in Psychoanalytic Work', in Freud (1990), *Art and Literature* (PFL 14), pp.291-320, p.299.

²Adorno, 'Messages in a Bottle', p.13.

consciousness and revolutionary action, but the same problematic logic seemingly prevails. Just as Adorno criticises the masses on behalf of the masses, who are condemned by the gesture meant to redeem them, Adorno's proto-feminism has to do without a positive feminine subject. Adorno's critique of the depth of patriarchal oppression, of what has been made of femininity, relies on depicting it as reduced to a sorry state. As with Adorno's theory of the stunted consciousness of the masses, a partial critique of Nietzsche plays an important role in this depiction of femininity. The critical point is to ascribe femininity, negatively characterised, not to nature but to 'masculine society.'¹ Nietzsche forgets this:

He fell for the fraud of saying 'the feminine' when talking of women. Hence the perfidious advice not to forget the whip: femininity itself is already the mark of the whip. The liberation of nature would be to abolish its self-fabrication. Glorification of the feminine character implies the humiliation of all who bear it.²

So, Nietzsche's savage portrait of the feminine is not contested by Adorno, merely contextualised. As with Kafka's struggle to understand the reproduction of problematic erotic relations, caricature plays an important role in this critical balancing act.

Kafka's black humour often revolves around painful emotional situations born of the clash of sexual difference. These situations rely on Kafka giving his characters an exaggerated 'cartoon-like quality as they shuffle around like cards in a pack of (un)happy families.'³ Boa provides a detailed typography of the various gendered roles in Kafka's work. I have discussed a few of them already: vacillating K., respectable Fräulein

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.95.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.96.

³Boa, *Kafka*, p.284.

Bürstner, promiscuous Leni (the swamp creature), put-upon Amalia and struggling Frieda - with whom K. passes those brief moments of vulnerable happiness. Adorno, along Freudian lines, reads these figures as fragments of a dichotomous male perspective on women. As such, they could be regarded as reified and dominating images, but Boa provides a more nuanced reception of Kafka's work, concluding:

its anatomy of patriarchy uncovers endless contradictions: there may be accommodation, but scarcely affirmation, and a subterranean humour makes the scandal of patriarchy ludicrous. Although the humour offers no programmatic exit, it is a kind of rebellion.¹

Something similar could be said of Adorno's blackest remarks on femininity, which take Freud's anatomical theories with a tongue-in-cheek literalness; 'The woman who feels herself a wound when she bleeds knows more about herself than the one who imagines herself a flower because that suits her husband.'² Boa's defence of this sort of caricature in Kafka is powerful, and could be extended to Adorno. But Andrew Hewitt has traced the problematic side of this either/or approach to femininity in a detailed study of Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.³ Some of Hewitt's remarks serve as a useful critical perspective on Adorno's theories of sexual difference. The dichotomous sexual double-bind Hewitt finds in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* certainly emerges in Adorno's reading of Kafka:

Women only seem to figure either [...] as the guardians of a patriarchal order vacated by the patriarch, or [...] as

¹Boa, *Kafka*, p.286.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.95. Jay takes this as one example of what Adorno meant by the true exaggerations of psychoanalysis. *Adorno*, p.90.

³A. Hewitt (1992), 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment?: Horkheimer and Adorno Revisited' in *New German Critique*, no. 56 Spring-Summer 1992, pp.143-170.

figures of historical regression and oblivion. Wife and whore are more than just valorisations of woman *within* the patriarchal narrative - they are fundamental to its very discursive organisation.¹

As I have suggested (Sections IV and V), Adorno and Kafka put a critical twist on their reproductions of these traditional dichotomies - Kafka's women are rarely dupes - but reproduce them they do: 'In other words, the masculine self-indictment of philosophy serves in fact - and despite itself - as a rear-guard action of precisely that phallogentric tradition which is supposedly under attack.'²

Shuttling between the broken fragments of the shattered mirror a compromised masculinity holds up to femininity may be illuminating, but the artificial angel which reflects the light for us has its back to the future, and so cannot see what woman might become. Its gaze is therefore blackly masculine and appropriative. This is typical of the amoralistic dark writers to whom Adorno owes so much. The image of a machine angel is aggressively phallic in character. Adorno reveals its grim roots:

During the First World War or shortly after, Klee drew cartoons of Kaiser Wilhelm as an inhuman iron-eater. Later, in 1920, these became - the development can be shown quite clearly - the Angelus Novus, the angel of the machine, who though he no longer bears any emblem of caricature or commitment, flies far beyond both. The machine angel's enigmatic eyes force the onlooker to try to decide whether he is announcing the culmination of disaster or salvation hidden within it. But, as Walter Benjamin, who owned the drawing, said, he is the angel who does not give, but takes.³

¹Hewitt, 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment?', p.165.

²Hewitt, 'A Feminine Dialectic of Enlightenment?', p.150.

³Adorno, 'Commitment', p.194-195.

Under the guise of giving the problem of patriarchal oppression the attention it deserves, Adorno "takes" femininity for his own use: as a confirmation of the fallen state of the world, even as the idea of womanhood is used as a carrier of hope for the future. The conceptualisation of woman as either disaster or salvation is an inheritance (Eve and Mary, perhaps) from the Judaeo-Christian tradition whose content Adorno accuses Nietzsche of uncritically duplicating.¹ As such, it is dogged with problems of its own. Adorno's treatment of the "woman question" ultimately confirms his own sovereign position as an autonomous theorist, at the expense of yet again turning women's subjective experience into an object of the male gaze.

iii. Finally, Kafka himself gets the same treatment as the proletarian and the woman - fed into Adorno's theory, he emerges as confirmation of it, as an artistic means to Adorno's theoretical end, whatever his own feelings might have been: 'The artist is not obliged to understand his own art, and there is particular reason to doubt whether Kafka was capable of such understanding.'² This remark is irritating, in the same manner as Freud's lofty tone when communicating to his professional readers the secrets of a case opaque to the patient in question. However, such remarks from Adorno in regard to Kafka's art are not as insulting as they might be from Freud in regard to a client's symptoms. Following Adorno's maxim from *Minima Moralia*, 'True thoughts are those alone which do not understand themselves,'³ one could take them as high praise. Authentic literature, including Kafka's and Adorno's, therefore lives on the connections it forges between the artist and things yet to come.

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.96.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.247.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.192.

This notion in Adorno's work is meant to dialectically sublate the messianic promises of immortality and redemption, but one is haunted by the feeling that to keep these promises hovering Adorno has to pass a death sentence on everything living. In this, *Negative Dialectics* perhaps shares the fate of the theological impulse whose sublation it so nobly attempted. Insistence on the fall, whether secular or theological, can be taken as a hatred of life.¹ A covert sensation - mordant satisfaction at the beautiful presentation of a closure of possibility which tries to ironically insist on openness - gratifies a hidden impulse in Adorno's work: the mimicry of death. By coupling the perspective of Kafka's animal stories with Adorno's own theory of mimesis, we could say that Adorno's negative montages of reality are meant as defensive reactions dedicated to the preservation of life. The animal which "plays dead," like a rabbit caught in headlights, hopes to spring to its feet again when the danger is past. But the omnipresent dangers of our age forced Adorno's theory to mimic death for so long its joints now risk habituation to this immobilisation: 'Protection as fear is a form of mimicry. The reflexes of stiffening and numbness in humans are archaic schemata of the urge to survive: by adaptation to death, life pays the toll of its continued existence.'² Adorno's hope is that a transfigured future could allow a reception of his work capable of unfreezing the burning presence of its thwarted desire to run free. But this reception may well depend on the hoped for transfiguration.

¹F. Nietzsche (1968), *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin. But see my discussion in Chapter Four of Adorno's critique of Nietzsche's affirmation.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.180.

In my next chapter, I unpack the theory of mimesis introduced in these concluding remarks, suggesting it can usefully be understood as another fruit of Adorno's appropriation of psychoanalysis.

CHAPTER THREE

DIALECTICS OF MIMESIS IN ADORNO AND FREUD.

Introduction.

Rather than seeking completely to explicate the concept of mimesis,¹ or Adorno's aesthetics,² in this chapter I concentrate on bringing out some of the Freudian elements of Adorno's use of the concept, especially as it relates to matters already introduced in my first two chapters: the psychoanalysis of authoritarianism; the proto-history of subjectivity; themes of sexual difference; the idea of secular redemption and the memory of its possibility; and, finally, Adorno's interweaving of all these through readings of literature in which certain thoughts about childhood play an important role.

This focus on the concept of mimesis, especially my tactic of emphasising psychoanalytic interpretations of it, runs the danger of misrepresenting Adorno's constellational analysis of artistic and fascistic relations to nature. Richard King gives a description of the constellational structure of 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' from *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, which also holds good for the other relevant Adorno texts. King notes that:

The challenges to reading 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' are several. The authors divided the chapter into seven

¹The most comprehensive treatment of the concept of mimesis in the Western philosophical tradition, with detailed chapters on Benjamin and Adorno, is G. Gebauer and C. Wulf (1985), *Mimesis: Culture, Art, Society*, trans. Don Reneau, Berkeley: University of California Press. Jay provides a short but accurate introduction to Adorno's use of the concept in *Adorno*, p.155-157.

²See Zuidervaat's ambitious *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory* for a fuller account, or Jay's *Adorno* for a general introduction.

sections which worked together as a kind of collage or 'constellation' of theoretical probes. The temptation, therefore, is to try to 'straighten out' the argument by paraphrasing it. The effect of this would be to deprive 'Elements' (or any of the other parts of the book) of the force deriving precisely from the formal arrangement: the multifaceted construction of the text conveys the effect of circling the phenomenon, which is itself incredibly complex; while the analysis, when it does come, deploys several types of discourses (Marxist, psychoanalytic, philosophical-epistemological and anthropological) without any one given privilege. Yet by the end a certain field has been traversed; a dialectical unfolding of a position presented.¹

Because my psychoanalytic focus runs the risk of unbalancing Adorno's constellation, I try to work in enough of the rest of the picture to give a flavour of Adorno's mode of argumentative construction, without attempting to mimic it exactly (the arch-temptation of all Adorno-criticism, to which one should partially, but never wholly, surrender - as with the counter-temptation of eagerly ironing out all the convolutions). This is especially necessary for *Aesthetic Theory*, in which Adorno takes his constellational parataxis to a height whose near-biblical dialectical contradictions are rendered even more disorientating by the work's unfinished quality.

In Section I of this chapter, 'Introduction to Adorno's Concept of Mimesis,' I sketch out the necessary background to Adorno's notoriously difficult concept, tracing its links with the idea of an erotic relationship with otherness hinted at in his readings of Proust and Kafka. In this section I introduce more of the factors to be unfolded in the rest of the chapter.

In Section II, 'Some Freudian Considerations of Art's Mimetic Dimension,' I discuss Adorno's critical development of Freudian

¹King, 'Culture and Barbarism', p.18.

anthropology, which he uses to trace the problematic development of the mimetic impulse from its spiritual expression in primitive ritual, to its suppression by instrumental reason and subsequently distorted rebellions. Art is one such rebellion, from the distortions of which good art tries to extricate itself.

In Section III, 'Dialectics of Mimesis and Rationality in Adorno's Aesthetics,' I examine Adorno's notion that through its autonomy from society, art becomes a refuge for mimetic rebellion, expressed through a dialectical relationship with constructive rationality. But art's mimetic rebellion is distorted by the isolation which only liberates it at the cost of renouncing art's desire for a reconciliation with reality in a sensuously realised good life. The unattainability of this desire is another form of Adorno's negative knowledge.

Section IV explores 'The Dark Side of Mimetic Rebellion.' Fascistic psychology is a refuge for a distorted mimesis of mimesis which gratifies the worst side of repressed nature whilst ideologically appealing to the best. Promising to unleash the power of nature through a disciplined application of its laws, the fascist really only mimics his own aggressive phantasy of natural law, whilst hating the glimmer of a real closeness to nature he thinks he detects in other races, who are envied even as they are condemned as alien primitives.

In Section V, 'Childhood, Comedy and Critique in Freud and Adorno,' I suggest that Adorno's differentiation of these varieties of mimesis can be clarified by reference to Freud's theory of the playful ideational mimetics characteristic of both sympathetic and sadistic humour. Freud's theory of mimetics takes the adult condemnation of childlike impulses as one motor of the comic, allowing me to reconnect with the notion of a critically infantile regression introduced in my earlier discussions of Proust and Kafka. This allows a reversal of the dialectic of

infancy and maturity at the heart of another historical conception of mimesis: the Greek notion of pedagogy via imitation. The ideal of the mature and rigidly controlled adult exemplar can be confronted with the utopian image of the spiritually mature yet childlike consciousness.

I: Introduction to Adorno's Concept of Mimesis.

The Greek word *mimesis* refers to imitation or mimicry. In biological terms, mimesis refers to the process in which usually harmless animals or plants copy the features of more dangerous creatures as a defensive reaction, or simply play dead until the danger has passed. A predatory reversal is not uncommon, in which a dangerous organism mimics something harmless in order to dupe its prey. These ideas play a role in Adorno's critical theory, and his conception of art, which both defensively mimic the world they wish to change,¹ whilst also pointing out the wolvine essence which hides behind the sheep-like appearance of consumer capitalism. Like Adorno's critical theory, art's frozen mimetic snapshots of reality take on its sclerotic features, whilst yearning for something more flexible, a something which glimmers elusively in the possibility of an open relationship between artworks and those who receive them. Modernist art mimics death to survive in a hostile world, which accounts for its dark mood: 'The objectivation of the work of art takes place at the expense of the depiction of the living. Works of art acquire life only when they renounce their likeness to the human.'² This is because for Adorno, life does not really live. So, art's renunciation of life is also a wish for the reception that could bring it back to life again through its unity with a transformed humanity.

Adorno's concept of mimesis is developed from anthropological and psychoanalytic speculations on the possible origins of human thought and language in magical and artistic practices dedicated to human self-

¹Zuidervaat identifies a psychoanalytic twist working here: 'Modern art is virtually an identification with the aggressor, a mimesis of reification,' *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p.168. The 'virtually' identifies the critical and reflective intent of the work.

²T.W. Adorno (1991), 'Valéry's Deviations,' in Adorno, *Notes to Literature, Volume One*, New York: Columbia University Press, pp.135-173, p.163.

preservation. A critical consideration of these speculations plays an important part in Adorno's critique of progress, which shows how aesthetic cognition rescues human and natural potentials lost in the historical sacrifice of mimesis by instrumental science (see Section II).

the concept of mimesis assumes a critical and corrective function vis-a-vis instrumental rationality and the identifying logic of conceptual language which distances subject from object and represses the non-identity of the latter. Since, however, the historical subjugation of nature has irrevocably transformed nature and sundered its relations with society, mimetic practice can be thought of only in a utopian mode. As a utopian category, mimesis prefigures the possibility of a reconciliation with nature, which includes the inner nature of human beings, the body and the unconscious.¹

The usual aesthetic application of the concept of mimesis refers to representation in general, but especially to the representation of nature. In Adorno's philosophy and aesthetics the notion of mimesis becomes, ideally at least, a way of conceiving a nondominating relationship with otherness. Gebauer and Wulf point out that Adorno defines mimesis as the 'non-conceptual affinity of the subjectively produced with its unposited other'² and as 'the power of qualitative distinction.'³ These definitions of mimesis counter the notion that Adorno cannot provide a theory of mimesis because of the vagueness of the concept. Habermas, Benhabib and Jameson all give variants of this argument, which mistakes its own vagueness for Adorno's.⁴

¹Hansen, 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing', p.52-52.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.54.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.331.

⁴See Osborne's critique of Jameson in 'A Marxism for the Postmodern?', p.176-177. P.U. Hohendahl discusses Habermas on mimesis in 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School', in *New German Critique*, no. 35 Spring-Summer 1985, New York: Telos Press, p.8, p.25.

As we will see in Section III, the mimetic power of qualitative affinity with otherness only emerges as art, or as what Adorno calls an aesthetic comportment towards objectivity, through the action of a mature constructive rationality which takes mimesis beyond mere repetition. But Adorno's aesthetic nevertheless relies on some of the more primally sensual and erotic characteristics of the concept, the dimension of mimesis as a form of bodily sympathy capable of sensing possible affinities between subject and object, subject and subject, and between objects themselves.¹ Adorno's very visceral notion is meant to get away from spiritualised conceptions of artistic experience:

Ultimately, aesthetic comportment is to be defined as the capacity to shudder, as if goose bumps were the first aesthetic image. [...] Consciousness without shudder is reified consciousness. That shudder in which subjectivity stirs without yet being subjectivity is the act of being touched by the other. Aesthetic comportment assimilates itself to that other rather than subordinating it. Such a constitutive relation of the subject to objectivity in aesthetic comportment joins eros and knowledge.²

The actions of another, or natural events, or the social environment itself may produce a sensual echo in our own physiognomy, an affect whose expression gives voice to relationships with otherness forgotten by instrumental reason. Think of the witness who winces when someone else is struck.³

Thrilling at a bolt of lightning or shuddering at the sound of thunder may involve the same mechanisms at work in the child who

¹Adorno, as usual, is drawing on Benjamin, especially Benjamin (1986), 'On the Mimetic Faculty', in, *Reflections*, New York: Schocken, pp.333-336. Zuidervaart discusses this primal/impulsive dimension of art on p.108 of *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.331.

³I here rework a quote heard at a conference, along the lines that mimesis was the feeling in one's own knees when witnessing another forced to theirs. I have a feeling the original source was Hullot-Kentor.

sways back and forth and jumps up and down in an act of identification with the computer hero they manipulate on the Nintendo screen. Otherness experientially imprints itself on us through mimesis, which thereby registers the hidden voice of the object, just as things speak to children in magical games and fairy tales through the mediation of the similarity-producing mimetic impulse. These ideas are set out by Walter Benjamin:

Nature creates similarities. One need only think of mimicry. The highest capacity for producing similarities, however, is man's. His gift of seeing resemblances is nothing other than a rudiment of the powerful compulsion in former times to become and behave like something else. Perhaps there is none of his higher functions in which his mimetic faculty does not play a decisive role.¹

For Adorno, the projection of the mimetic imprints as expression, especially artistic expression mediated by rational construction, allows mimesis to enrich the object through a subjective articulation of it:

Those whose thought is pure projection are fools, which artists must not be on any account; those, however, who do not project at all fail to grasp reality and instead repeat and falsify it by crushing out what glimmered however distantly to preanimistic consciousness: the communication of all dispersed particulars with each other.²

Maturity, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically, insists on the renunciation of these capacities, and the child must learn not to confuse itself with its environment, just as the sympathetic and qualitatively rich magic of the savage yielded historically to the methods of natural science,

¹Benjamin, 'On the Mimetic Faculty', p.332.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.330.

which repressively sublimate the mimetic impulse to produce instrumental reason and quantitative rationality. But what has been given up remains supremely attractive. For Adorno, the pull of the repressed elements of mimesis is a deeply ambiguous one, the source of both hidden potentials for human development through a non-dominating relationship with the alien, and inhuman regression to a sadistically projective mimesis of mimesis which wants to achieve harmony with the alien by destroying it or forcing it to become like the self. If one witness sympathetically flinches at the sight of violence, another may thrill sadistically, identifying with the aggressor. Mimesis has a 'double-character.'¹

Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* therefore problematises the simple celebration of mimesis, as well as narratives of progress based on its mastery. Their analysis is essentially Freudian, showing how the repression of mimesis simply results in its distorted return as a barbarous eruption of bloody nature expressed through dominating relations between people, such as those promulgated by fascism. Conversely, Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* explores the fragmented retention of the better potential of mimesis in art, where mimesis ultimately becomes an imitation of *nonsensuous* possibilities.

This is a difficult notion, drawn from Benjamin, which extends to a new level the tentative idea of a mimetic impulse which responds to our material environment using the various senses. Benjamin emphasises the human capacity for reading similarities between things at an ideational level of cognition, transcending the senses, especially in primitive magic and astrology. Gebauer and Wulf explain:

The term [nonsensuous similarity] designates similarities that are not directly legible but must be decoded, which

¹Hansen, 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing', p.48.

suggests the whole cosmos is permeated by similarities, the sense of which is always there to be exposed to minds capable of decoding it in an act of reading. Human being and nature, far from being strictly opposed as subject and object, are bound to each other. The sense of the world is revealed to the individual by way of the individual's adaptation to the world.¹

Adorno extends this idea of adaptation to the world to art itself, taking it as a form of almost conscious proto-subjectivity, art as *Geist* qua accumulated social labour, itself capable of responding mimetically to the world. With a small alteration, Gebauer and Wulf's explication of Benjamin in the last sentence of the above quote can unlock Adorno's reading of Kafka. The alteration, changing the 'sense' to 'nonsense,' deploys a different meaning of the concept of (the) nonsense(ical), showing how Kafka's prose adapts itself to a mad world in order to show up that madness. In Kafka, the nonsense of the world is revealed by our mimetic adaptation to it.

However, art also mimics and thereby preserves whatever the dominant *ratio* itself rejects as nonsense, that which rationality denies can ever really come to materially exist, the good life, which only persists as a diffuse historical possibility. Art can become the semblance of what is not yet existent, of things not present to our senses (*nonsensuous* similarity) except through the mediation of the artistic material. This material encodes chances forgotten in more conceptual recollections of human civilisation. In this unique sense, mimesis records the negative imprint in the present of a possible positive future which could be developed as a redemption of the repressed possibilities of the past. But because art is not really a transcendent subject, art's responses to the world can only be

¹ Gebauer and Wulf, *Mimesis*, p.270.

brought alive through a relationship with human subjectivity in an encounter between work and audience.

In Chapter One, Section V, I suggested that Adorno's ideal of conceptual openness to repressed possibility could be concretised with reference to the notion of an anaclitic relationship with sexual otherness, as evoked in Adorno's Proustian recollections of infantile eroticism. I there suggested that the artistic-theoretic constellation of the uncanny memories of memories with the mature construction of the evocative text itself, was an exemplar of Adorno's ideal aesthetic relationship. Bringing out this concrete sexual model, which surfaces only elusively in Adorno's restrained writing, can help counter the suspicion that Adorno's notion of mimesis is so obscure as to be worthlessly abstract, or that it cannot generate any normative project escaping the exploitative relations it supposedly criticises. Seyla Benhabib, following Habermas's scepticism about its usefulness, claims that 'the concept of "mimesis" is so fuzzy because it cannot suggest a real alternative to relations of domination.'¹ Actually, Adorno's sexual model is a concrete, for him the most concrete, exemplar of the ideal of a nondominating reciprocity between irreducibly different others, and this model has important aesthetic applications.

Adorno's most explicit sexual formulation is used to unpack the ideal mode of contemplative immersion in the elements of a work, which are thereby released from their coagulation and allowed to dynamically develop through this receptivity in the observer. Art comes alive through this reception, and its elements unfold. Observer and observed both become something new, in the same way that lovers transform each other, overcoming fixed identity through sexual experience. The incompleteness of each sex, like the incompleteness of each element of the artwork, demands its other:

¹Benhabib, *Critique, Norm, and Utopia*, p.219.

It is as a result of their own constitution that they go over into their other, find continuance in it, want to be extinguished in it, and in their demise determine what follows them. This immanent dynamic is, in a sense, a higher-order element of what artworks are. If anywhere, then it is here that aesthetic experience resembles sexual experience, indeed its culmination. The way the beloved image is transformed in this experience, the way rigidification is united with what is most intensely alive, effectively makes the experience the incarnate prototype of aesthetic experience.¹

Adorno returns to this notion several times. Adorno's critique of aridly academic art suggests that the urge to become completely consistent kills the diffuse Eros of art, and contrasts such art with something more sumptuous: 'These works are dry, which is in general what results when mimesis withers: according to the doctrine of temperament, Schubert - the mimic par excellence - would be sanguine, moist.'² Following Adorno's hints towards an erotic aesthetic, I am tempted to extrapolate to the type of moistness which really gets the blood flowing, taking Adorno's comment as a image of sexual lubrication. Obeying the Hegelian command to surrender to the object, Adorno suggests that the proper attitude to an artwork, as to a lover, is an attitude which seeks to complete the beloved, not to get something out of them:

The spectator must not project what transpires in himself onto the artwork in order to find himself confirmed, uplifted and satisfied in it, but must, on the contrary, relinquish himself to the artwork, assimilate himself to it, and fulfil the work in its own terms.³

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.176.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.188. Some might imagine that Adorno's enthusiasm for the new music demonstrated an academic aridity of his own. But Adorno was not simply an advocate of the atonal twelve tone method, which became a rigid prison. His favourite works seem to be those just-tonal works on the verge of a musical break-down come break-through into atonality.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.275.

In Chapter Two, I examined Adorno's attempt to find glimmers of an erotic utopia through a careful attention to Kafka's negative portrayal of erotic degradation. In *The Castle*, K.'s aversion to intercourse, his fear of a choking loss of identity, is akin to the bourgeois fear of moistness manifested in dry art. But K.'s aversion is countered by a childlike pull towards a maternal closeness with the other. This split between the affectionate and sensual currents of love in Kafka yearns for something else, and this yearning is also a figure for an open and nondominating union between art and life, between spirit and matter. These motifs of splitting and (blocked) reconciliation are a pervasive feature of Adorno's theory, and ultimately they all derive from Adorno's complex considerations of the human attempt to wrest a subjective identity from the smothering bosom of natural immediacy. Here, anthropology, aesthetics and psychoanalysis come together in considerations of primitive art, religion and magic.

II: Some Freudian Considerations of Art's Mimetic Dimension.

Adorno warns of the perils of what could be called "originology:" 'Immersion in art's origins tantalises aesthetic theory with various apparently typical procedures, but just as quickly they escape the firm grip that modern interpretational consciousness imagines it possesses.'¹

Such disclaimers dot Adorno's work, but are always surrounded by erudite speculations on whatever it is he has just placed under a ban. Accordingly, Adorno's theory is rich in thoughts on prehistory. The murky relation between art and magic is of special importance, because it involves several twists of the dialectic of myth and enlightenment at the heart of Adorno's critical theory. Adorno shows that contrary to its self-understanding, enlightened science produces a form of quantitative reason which mimics the rigid repetitions of primitive myth through a repressive sublimation of mimesis, whereas art's apparent illusions and irrationalities sublimate mimesis in search of the genuinely new; a humane existence based on a rationality capable of qualitative distinction.

In using a mimetic concept of art often associated with theories of tribal magic, Adorno follows a line of anthropological enquiry of supreme interest to Freud. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud suggests that art contains residues of repressed stages of historical development:

People speak with justice of the 'magic of art' and compare artists to magicians. But the comparison is perhaps more significant that it claims to be. There can be no doubt that art did not begin as art for art's sake. It worked originally in the service of impulses which are for the most part extinct today. And among them we may suspect the presence of many magical processes.²

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.329.

²S. Freud (1913), *Totem and Taboo*, in Freud (1990), *The Origin of Religion* (PFL 13), London: Penguin, pp.43-224, p.149.

Freud emphasises the importance of mimicry in certain of these magical purposes, in which the crucial factor is 'the similarity between the act performed and the result expected.'¹

Adorno and Horkheimer provide a critique of *Totem and Taboo* in their *Dialectic of Enlightenment*,² and Adorno is careful to separate even primitive art from magic, but it is nevertheless important to realise that Freud's reflections on the anthropology of his era are one important source for *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, especially the first chapter on 'The Concept of Enlightenment.'³ Freud summarises the enlightened theory of human development that forms one focus of Adorno's critique of civilisation: 'The human race, if we are to follow the authorities, have in the course of the ages developed three [...] systems of thought - three great pictures of the universe: animistic (or mythological), religious and scientific.'⁴

In this model, art is seen as a vestige of animistic magic, whereas Adorno complicates this view by insisting the aesthetic modality be defined by its separation from the attempt to manipulate the world through magic - 'the superstition of direct magical influence'⁵ - which in its instrumentality is in fact closer to reified science. Adorno talks of 'the origin of artworks in magic: They shared in a praxis meant to influence nature, separated from this praxis in the early history of rationality, and renounced the deception of any real influence.'⁶ Against both animistic

¹Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.138.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.10, 11, 15.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.3-42. Whitebook discusses Adorno's readings of Freud's anthropology in *Perversion and Utopia*, p.93-96. Whitebook's discussion centres on the same texts and citations as mine, prompted (like me) by Adorno and Horkheimer's selection. However, Whitebook is less concerned with the vicissitudes of the mimetic impulse.

⁴Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.134.

⁵Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 329.

⁶Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.139.

and scientific instrumentality, artistic mimesis exerts an aesthetic control over its material dedicated to freeing it, not exploiting it. The artistic pursuit of a free association between subject and object is an attempt to consciously develop a cultured erotic relation between particulars, Adorno's sexually pregnant utopia.

Freud more rigidly separates myth and enlightenment. According to Freud, in the mythic-animistic phase, a phantasy 'omnipotence of thoughts',¹ in which the universe is experienced as revolving around human categories established through ritual practices, masks a reality of human frailty in the face of nature. For example, the savage cloaks himself in the skin of his totem animal in an act of mimetic identification which cunningly appropriates the feared power. For Freud, the Oedipal drama lies behind these projections, with the primal father as the real power to be appeased through identification.

The animistic world view functions as a psychological defence against the overwhelming power of natural forces, just as the child resolves their Oedipal crisis of authority by identifying with the father. The mimetic operations of animism read the subject into nature and thereby identify with it in a mental domestication of what cannot actually be controlled. Freud suggests that in a sort of unreflective idealism, the contents of the primitive human mind are projected outwards as a way of convincing the weak self that it can exert a degree of control over the forces outside the self:

A general overvaluation has thus come about of all mental processes - an attitude towards the world, that is, which, in view of our knowledge of the relation between reality and thought, cannot fail to strike *us* as an overvaluation of the latter. Things become less important

¹Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.143.

than the idea of things: what ever is done to the latter will inevitably also occur to the former.¹

The religious phase involves the beginning of a distancing from these magically mimetic sympathies and affinities through processes of abstraction which compress the rich spiritual world, in which all natural materials are the location of *mana*, into the divine principles of a few deities: 'The gods are distinguished from material elements as their quintessential concepts.'² The Greek mind idolised its own differentiation from primitivism in the epics, which celebrate the development of individuality in the cunning acts of the heroes who overcome the forces of nature and primitive magic through an understanding of fate and divinity.³ As I suggested in Chapter Two, Section II ('Exaggerating Psychoanalysis'), Freud regards the development of monotheism as a further sublimation of the unruly impulses symbolised by the diffuse range of gods. For Freud, the renunciation of magic under the law of the fathers freed the Jews from the yoke of myth, leaving their energies free to make them bearers of scientific enlightenment in a world of savages (and cursing them to suffer the resentment of those they judged backward).⁴

By the time the scientific stage is reached, a more realistic evaluation of human insignificance⁵ has paradoxically allowed man to actually 'alter the whole face of the earth in order to satisfy his wishes.'⁶

¹Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.142.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.8.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp.43-80.

⁴ In Section IV of this chapter I will show how Adorno also takes the opposite tack, suggesting that Jewish culture appears to others as a haven of pre-modern freedoms and strengths; such as nomadism and extended family ties. Adorno is more inclined to regard such alleged features of Jewish culture as defensive strategies forced on the Jews by a hostile world, following the thesis common to Jean-Paul Sartre and Adorno: The anti-Semite creates the Jew.

⁵Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.146.

⁶Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.141.

The whole scheme of development, from imitative magic to science, is described by Freud, who uses the example of the urge to influence the weather:

If I wish it to rain, I have only to do something that looks like rain or is reminiscent of rain. At a later stage of civilization, instead of this rain magic, processions will be made to a temple and prayers for rain will be addressed to the deity living in it. Finally, this religious technique will in its turn be given up and attempts will be made to produce effects in the atmosphere which will lead to rain.¹

Adopting this traditional developmental perspective, Freud is happy to depict enlightenment as a progressive renunciation of mythic delusion, enabling man to more successfully dominate nature. The scientist shuns unreflective mimesis, and instead puts it to work in the conceptual reduplication of nature, in order to learn her secrets. Magical and artistic forms of mimesis are now disparaged as phantasised links with nature maintained through primitive mental versions of the ideas of reference common in obsessional neurosis. The general drift of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is to show how the gung-ho and instrumental confidence of Freud's final stage is problematically limited. To extend Freud's example of attempts to influence the weather, we could point out that, firstly, direct attempts to 'seed' clouds are largely ineffective, and secondly, the fantasy of the techno-fix reduplicates the stuntedly short-term form of reason typical of Freud's era, whose industrial revolution set in motion the degradation of the biosphere which has made desertification an endemic feature of the global landscape. In seeming to escape the phantasy of direct magical influence, scientific progress still remains spellbound, entranced by its own powers. Science turns the phantasy of magical influence into reality, but makes a phantasy of the reality of mimetic

¹Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.138.

affinity in the preanimistic consciousness, violently disposing of the image of a reconciliation with nature.

The deep link between science and the mythic mimesis it imagines it has transcended can be shown by a more careful consideration of Freud's critique of magic. Magic phantasises that what is done 'to the idea of things'¹ happens to the things themselves. In science, this actually happens: ideas enacted on the conceptual-mathematical model of nature produced through the scientific mimicry of nature are then carried through on the objects themselves. Reduplication and repeatability are the common stuff of mythic ritual and laboratory technique, and the latter is by no means an emancipation from the former:

Science is repetition, refined into observed regularity, and preserved in stereotypes. The mathematical formula is regression handled consciously, just as the magic ritual used to be; it is the most sublimated manifestation of mimicry. Technology no longer completes the approximation to death for the sake of survival by physical imitation of external nature, as was the case with magic, but by automation of the mental processes, by converting them into blind cycles.²

Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* accordingly seeks to problematise the strict division of myth and enlightenment in order to mount a critique of progress.³ Like Freud, they treat science and

¹Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, p.142.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.181. It is worth noting that the ability of mathematics to handle regression consciously shows its positive potential, but Adorno sees it as incapable of producing a second reflection on its function. Self-reflective and conscious regression is the type of thing Adorno defends in Kafka and Proust, portraying it as more enlightened than science. Zuidervaat reminds us not to take this as anti-science: 'The task of Adorno's philosophy is to help science and art interpenetrate by letting discursive rigor and experiential flexibility correct each other within philosophy itself.' *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p.133.

³M. Löwy and E. Varikas (1995), "'The World Spirit on the Fins of a Rocket': Adorno's Critique of Progress', in *Radical Philosophy*, no. 70, March/April 1995, pp.9-15.

technology as a refinement of the will to mastery already expressed in the techniques of magic which sought to control the world by imitating it. This is captured in the dictum 'myth is already enlightenment.'¹

modern natural science did not provide a neutral, timeless methodology for the disinterested pursuit of truth but constituted nature from a particular perspective [...] that perspective possessed technological domination, which is to say, omnipotent mastery, among its innermost possibilities. Modern positivism, in short, turned out to be another idol of the tribe that has fallen, at least in its hegemonic form.²

The development of science through the sublimation of myth also involves repressions and fixations, which, respectively, betray the better aspects of myth and unconsciously regress to the worst: 'enlightenment reverts to myth.'³ The better moment of the mythic world is its mimetic respect for the qualities of the object itself, which Freud obscures behind his insistence that mythic mimesis is pure projection. The worst element of myth is that its system of knowledge is closed, totalising and incapable of reflection on its limits. Similarly, nominalist empiricism rubs out the particular registered by mimesis in an anthropocentric pursuit of rationality, which becomes unidimensional and idealistically projective in its own manner:

Because the distinctions in functional science are so fluid that everything is subsumed in the same matter, the scientific object is petrified, and the fixed ritual of former times appears flexible because it attributed the other to the one. The world of magic retained distinctions whose traces have disappeared even in linguistic form. The multitudinous affinities between existents are suppressed by the single relation between the subject who bestows

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.xvi.

²Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.95.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.xvi.

meaning and the meaningless object, between rational significance and the chance vehicle of significance.¹

Freud's unreflectively enlightened perspective is not attuned to such insights, and Adorno's and Horkheimer's critique of Freud is prompted by their detection of an idealist flaw in Freud's supposedly materialist schema. Freud merely repeats the savage's alleged idealism when he suggests that the meaning bestowed on the objects of magic is purely projective. Freud fails to carry through the psychoanalytic realisation that the phantasies of primitive idealism have a basis in experiences of materiality and sociality. These phantasies must register the impact of the object on the subject and of the relations between subjects, even if primitive modes of consciousness are themselves unaware of this.

By means of the mimetic impulse, the living being equates itself with objects in his surroundings. This occurs long before artists initiate conscious imitation [...] The inner image which is expressed in that impulse was once something external, something coercively objective.²

Freud's failure to understand early forms of subjectivity as an imprint of the primacy of the object involves the same process as his quantitative-hydraulic neglect of the subtle experiential quality of childhood experience (Chapter One, Section V; 'Childhood and Utopia'). Terms of reference proper to a later stage of development are again used to describe the experience of an earlier one. Magic, for Adorno and Horkheimer,

is not grounded in the 'sovereignty of ideas' which the primitive, like the neurotic, is said to ascribe to himself;

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.10-11.

²T.W. Adorno (1997), 'Functionalism Today', in N. Leach (ed.), *Rethinking Architecture*, London: Routledge, pp.6-19, p.10.

there can be no 'overvaluation of mental processes as against reality' where there is no radical distinction between thoughts and reality.¹

Since Freud connects magic and narcissism,² it is worth noting that the same logical flaw dogs the theory of primary narcissism. This describes the oceanic oneness of intra-uterine experience as the hyper-cathexis of the ego, even though that ego has not yet developed. 'It is difficult to see just *what* is supposed to be cathected in primary narcissism thus conceived.'³ Something must exist to be cathected. In a logical reversal of this aporia of Freudian metapsychology, Adorno and Horkheimer insist that in the perception of magical affinities between particulars, despite the untruth of magical influence, the primitive must actually respond to *something* in nature, or in human society, because the subject-object split is too permeable to talk properly of projection. 'When a clan member imitatively makes himself into a totemic animal or a fearful divinity, something other than the self-contained individual is expressed.'⁴ If the locus of selfhood has not split off from nature, it cannot simply project itself upon it:

It is not the soul which is transposed to nature, as psychologism would have it; *mana*, the moving spirit, is no projection, but the echo of the real supremacy of nature in the weak souls of primitive men.⁵

Once again, the theoretical consequence of Adorno's immanent critique of psychoanalysis is that applying its concepts more consistently

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.11.

²S. Freud (1914), 'On Narcissism: an Introduction' in S. Freud (1991), *On Metapsychology*, (PFL 11), pp.59-98, p.67-68.

³J. Laplanche and J.B. Pontalis (1988), *The Language of Psychoanalysis*, London: Karnac, p.338.

⁴Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.328.

⁵Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.15.

than Freud himself disrupts Freud's formulations. This can be shown by considering Freud's postulated links between his accounts of primal and individual histories of instinctual nature. Freud points out that the child's image of the violent father is generated in part by their own aggressive impulses. If we extend this to the historical situation between man and nature, as is justified by the linkage in *Totem and Taboo* of Oedipus and totemism, we could hypothesise that the primitive's fear of nature is in part based on his own desire to consume it. However, Adorno and Horkheimer's critique of the concept of primitive projection would allow the realisation that the real danger of being overwhelmed by nature prompts the aggressively consuming reactions of the self-preservation drive. On this reading, the so-called primitive projection is in a certain sense true, but the mimetic capacity for sympathetic identification with otherness balances the urge to sadistically control nature, and mythic rituals accordingly include propriative aspects as a counterweight to their project of magically dominating the world.

But, under the pressure of scarcity (natural scarcity in Freud, contingent historical scarcity caused by class domination in Adorno and Marcuse), the consuming reactions gradually win out, evolving into the scientific operations of instrumental reason which seem to escape natural ties. Eventually, however, these operations actually threaten self-preservation through turning its demands into a fetish, supported by a taboo on the mimetic capacity, allowing the instrumental domination of nature to run dangerously out of control. The repressed mimetic capacity meanwhile exerts a distorted pull towards nature that can only appear as regressive to the instrumental reason which regards identification with the natural as an irrational brake on progress. Freud merely reproduces this prejudice and endorses this repression. Yet, as Freud taught, whatever is repressed constantly struggles to return.

Adorno treats the return of repressed mimesis as a dilemmatic phenomenon. Following the logic of his idea that the id is the voice of repressed nature within man, not the voice of nature *per se*, the echoes of the atrophied mimetic impulse today appear in highly mediated and distorted ways. Whilst these manifestations are always in a sense regressive, Adorno holds out hope that if approached in the proper manner, these regressions can be harnessed as artistic critiques of the present:

In the traces of what has been overtaken by the general course of things, all art bears the suspicious burden of what did not make the grade, the regressive. But aesthetic comportment is not altogether rudimentary. An irrevocable necessity of art and preserved by it, aesthetic comportment contains what has been belligerently excised from civilisation and repressed, as well as the human suffering under the loss, a suffering already expressed in the earliest forms of mimesis.¹

In order to express suffering, art must steer the mimetic regressions into a rigorous clash with the organising force of the rationality embedded in the accumulated laws of aesthetic form, in a reflective repetition of the clash between nature and culture.

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.329-330.

III: Dialectics of Mimesis and Rationality in Adorno's Aesthetics.¹

Art's attempt to free itself from instrumentality and provide a voice for suffering, both human and natural, is paradoxically assisted by the scientific taboo on mimetic expression. The isolation of certain dimensions of mimesis from practical activity, encouraged by the increasing social division of labour, allows art a degree of aesthetic autonomy from society. This autonomy is therefore a social fact which allows art to criticise society:

art becomes social by its opposition to society, and it occupies this position only as autonomous art. By crystallizing in itself as something unique to itself, rather than complying with existing social norms and qualifying as 'socially useful,' it criticizes society by merely existing, for which puritans of all stripes condemn it.²

But, as with mechanisms of schizoid withdrawal, the isolation of mimesis condemns it to a form of solipsism which sunders the direct link between mimesis and praxis, and between the aesthetic and social spheres. This is why art is tolerated. The social still determines the aesthetic, but only mediately, via the relatively autonomous development of the laws of aesthetic form. Art, as a refuge of the mimetic element, wants to take on the task of letting objects speak again. But for Adorno the object is always socially structured in such a way that art's autonomy from the social also prevents art from directly and unmediately giving expression to social suffering. As soon as art tries to speak directly, it falls into the distorting force field of dominant forms of conceptuality. Art's rendering of the

¹A talk by Maggie O'Neill, given at Nottingham Polytechnic some eight years ago, introduced me to the importance of this theme in Adorno's aesthetics.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.225-226.

speech of suffering is not irrational, but neither can it be transparent. Behind these themes in Adorno lie Benjamin's thoughts on the loss of the transparent Adamic tongue and the allegory of the fall encrypted in the story of the tower of Babel.¹ Engagement with art therefore requires reflection, the learning of a qualitatively new rationality, an impossibly non-conceptual language: 'If the language of nature is mute, art seeks to make this muteness eloquent, which demands a desperate effort, and the idea of what this effort would amount to, the idea of what cannot in any way be willed.'²

This progressively rational moment (truly progressive, because it does not sacrifice mimesis, yet is not wholly in thrall to it either) has always been part of art. Adorno suggests that even if in immediately mimetic myth the subjective articulation of the imprint of the object was an unreflectively lived experience, it was never a complete immersion in it. Primitive aesthetic mimesis, such as imitation of a totem animal or demon, is not wholly naive, and shares in rationality. Adorno credits the 'primitive' with the enlightened awareness of the distinction between the cultic mask and what it represents, even where that distinction is undeveloped. Adorno relates this to the games of children: 'children playing do not distinguish sharply between themselves and the role played yet can at any moment be called back to reality.'³ In his work on authoritarian irrationalism Adorno makes a similar point about fascist propaganda, astrological theory, and advertising images, suggesting that no-one is wholly and unconsciously duped by these phenomena. Rather,

¹See Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory* and Roberts, *Walter Benjamin*.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.78.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.328.

identification with the ideological messages proceeds through a preconscious cynicism, which half-believes what it sees through.¹

Modernist art shares more fully in enlightenment by attempting to make the mimetic impulse wholly conscious. This involves juxtaposing mimesis with the element of constructive rationality. Adorno favours the openly constructed character of authentic modernist art over the anachronistic production of 'realistic' art which tries to cynically close its eyes to its preconscious awareness of its inadequate mimicry, by hiding its construction. 'New art accents the once hidden element of being something made.'² Constructivism is the most obvious example of this. In becoming true to its own manufactured status, modernist art can more successfully mimic nature than any attempt to copy it: 'art imitates itself.'³ Fidelity to the development of aesthetic laws becomes a mimesis of nature's fidelity to itself. In growing away from the simple replication of nature, art grows closer to it. If the mimetic moment of a work is its reflection or imitation of the world, the constructive moment is that which allows the work to become true to its inner compulsion as well as to reality:

Construction tears the elements of reality out of their primary context and transforms them to the point where they are once again capable of forming a unity, one that is no less imposed on them internally than was the heteronomous unity to which they were subjected externally.⁴

Max Ernst's collages of fragments of *frottage* externalise the dialectic of mimesis and rationality internal to all art. The use of rubbings taken

¹See Adorno, *The Stars Down to Earth, The Culture Industry*, 'Freudian Theory and The Pattern of Fascist Propaganda.'

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.26.

³Zuidervaat, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p.133.

⁴Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.57.

from various surfaces is a directly mimetic technique, but the tearing of the rubbings into new shapes and their re-arrangement in a collage prompted by Ernst's artistic free association of the elements, brings a strict constructive rationality into play.

Nature, for its part, is ever more mediated and reified by the unleashed forces of production characteristic of the scientific phase of human development, so when art attempts a reflective mimesis of natural reality, it finds itself mimicking the social totality instead. Ernst's frottaged horse captures more life than the realistic "portraits" of horses which reflect the class interests of the commercial racing fraternity. In bad art, even good bad art, this mimicry of the social totality is unconscious and repressed, often expressed in the manner of a reaction-formation. For example, the sugary images of natural beauty beloved of pre-Raphaelite, *art nouveau* and symbolist painters obviously mimic a socially dictated ideology of the natural, a negative of the process of industrialisation sweeping through Europe. Modernist art, through its more radical autonomy from society, manages to bring the socially dictated moment clearly into view. On this reading, the apparently asocial abstractions of cubism reflect the objective social planification of nature:

Cubism could be interpreted as a form of reaction to a stage of the rationalization of the social world that undertook its geometrical organisation; in these terms cubism was an attempt to bring within the bounds of experience what is otherwise contrary to it.¹

Thoughts on cubism also appear in 'Notes on Kafka,' where Adorno suggests that Kafka's twilight zone between life and death is a similar presentiment of the various fates worse than death characteristic of modern forms of violence. In the section on cubism from *Aesthetic*

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.301.

Theory, Adorno repeats an idea from the earlier paper: 'Historically cubism anticipated something real, the aerial photographs of bombed out cities during World War II. It was through cubism that art for the first time documented that life no longer lives.'¹

The conscious mimesis of a reified reality carried out in modernist art, including Picasso's and Kafka's, is conceived by Adorno as an artistic second reflection of the object's primacy. This primacy is only registered unreflectively in myth, magic and realistic art. The notion of a second reflection on the object's primacy is described in abstract theoretical terms in *Negative Dialectics* ² and also in the much shorter paper 'Subject and Object.'³

The relation between subject and object is the paradigmatic model of dialectical mediation in Adorno. He notes that even to define the terms 'takes reflection on the very thing which definition cuts off for the sake of conceptual flexibility,'⁴ i.e. the mutual mediation of subject and object. Adorno says that this mediation must be materialistically skewed towards the 'primacy of the object'⁵ because

no matter how we define the subject, some entity cannot be juggled out of it. If it is not something - and 'something' indicates an irreducible objective moment - the subject is nothing at all [...] the object's primacy [...] is the corrective of the subjective reduction, not the denial of a subjective share.⁶

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.301.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp.135-207. For a recent explication and appropriation of Adorno's thesis of the primacy of the object in the context of feminist debates about discourse and materiality, see C.L. Hull (1997), 'The need in Thinking: Materiality in Theodor W. Adorno and Judith Butler' in *Radical Philosophy*, no. 84, July/August 1997, pp.22-35.

³T.W. Adorno (1969), 'Subject and Object', in Arato and Gebhardt (eds.) (1978), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, London: Blackwell, pp.497-511.

⁴Adorno, 'Subject and Object', p.498.

⁵Adorno, 'Subject and Object', p.503.

⁶Adorno, 'Subject and Object', p.502.

This defines the sense in which the seemingly merely subjective productions of the artist *have* to be mimetic imprints of the object - a first reflection of its primacy, like magic. The quality of modernist artworks is defined by Adorno in terms of their ability to reflect on this reflection in a conscious subjective mediation of the object's primacy: their second reflection. To put this in psychoanalytic terms, we could say that all art acts out the object's primacy, either unconsciously or preconsciously, but only certain examples of modernist art work it through, sublating the mythic immediacy which is nevertheless the root of their claim to totality. So, 'if one wants to reach the object [...] its subjective attributes or qualities are not to be eliminated, for precisely that would run counter to the primacy of the object.'¹

This is why the self-consciously subjective moment of constructive rationality is a necessary counterpoint to the objective moment of mimesis. The imprint of the object registered by mimesis requires a subject to record the impression. Subjectivity is part of objectivity and cannot be stripped out, scientifically or otherwise. Kafka's special talent is the recording of the process whereby the subjective domination of the object actually reifies the subject, because that subject is determined by its own objective products. Kafka provides a literary expression of Marx's theory of the commodity fetish: the subject which dominates itself through its domination of objects loses the capacity for a comprehension of this state of affairs.

Kafka's mimetic reproduction of horrifying elements of reality could also be seen as a cunning defence mechanism, like that of the hover fly which makes non-violent use of the stripes of the aggressive wasp. We laugh when someone ducks away, scared by a hover fly they think is a

¹Adorno, 'Subject and Object', p.502.

wasp. This allows an insight into the power of the wasp: the absence of a real danger highlights the intensity of the automatic reaction to the striped stimulus. The unease provoked by Kafka's texts can operate in a similar manner. Safe at home reading our Penguin editions of Kafka, we still share in Kafka's acute diagnoses of modern social alienation. Kafka cannot really sting us, but we shrink away anyway. When Kafka read the beginning of *The Trial* to his friends, he chuckled over the black humour implicit in the situation of enduring a false arrest while a nosy neighbour peeks at you; his friends recoiled at the image of injustice.

Expressively mimetic reactions are common in Kafka's texts. Adorno uses Benjamin's notion that language develops from the involuntary gestures and expressions of surprise which accompany the shock of the new, to examine the bodily subtext which rages beneath the placid surface of certain speeches in Kafka. Kafka's characters tell us one thing with their words, but reveal another through their postural semaphore code: 'gestures often serve as counterpoints to words.'¹ This language of gesture may reveal 'traces of experiences covered over by signification.'² Adorno suggests: 'The experiences sedimented in the gestures will eventually have to be followed by interpretation, one which recognises in their mimesis a universal which has been repressed by sound common sense.'³

This reference to the interpretation of gesture could be read as an allusion to Freud's interpretation of symptomatic actions, and certainly suggests that the operations of the mimetic impulse are usually partially conscious, at best. For example, Dora slips her finger in and out of her purse in an unconscious mimicry of the masturbation she is reluctant to disclose. 'He that has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.248

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.249.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.249

that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore.'¹

As I have already suggested with reference to Kafka's use of the mechanisms of dreams and parapraxes, Adorno credits him with the conscious deployment of unconscious processes. Steiner calls attention to an episode from *The Trial* which can serve as a reminder. On his way to visit a painter with various important connections, K. is pestered by 'the young girls who cluster harpy-like around the studio of Titorelli the painter. The German language amalgamates the word for "birds" with that for "fucking."'² Later on in the same episode, one of the same girls carries out an action reminiscent of Dora's, but even more suggestive. The girl 'had thrust a blade of straw through a crack between the planks and was moving it slowly up and down.'³

If such actions are particular operations of the mimetic impulse, then Kafka's portrayal of less "Freudian" gestures and expressions, particularly those moments when Kafka's protagonists let themselves go in regressive or childlike actions, may be a reflectively manipulated equivalent, an artistic window into the archaic inheritance repressed by progress and which returns as the uncanny. Kafka's harried protagonists periodically collapse into exhausted states, seeking (but only occasionally getting) the rest they need. This sleep, symbol of regression and infancy, usually comes at the cost of missing something important - perhaps betokening the civilised need to limit the baby-like regression to blissful rest in order to "get on." Eventually, rest passes under an obscure taboo. People are often strangely averse to photographs taken whilst they are

¹S. Freud (1905), *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria*, in Freud (1990), *Case Histories I* (PFL 8), pp.31-166, p.114.

²Steiner, 'A Note on Kafka's "Trial"', p.247.

³Kafka, *The Trial*, p.167.

asleep, embarrassed at the loss of control, the tender surrender to nature which waking life eschews:

Those blinded by civilisation experience their own tabooed mimetic features only in certain gestures and behaviour patterns which they encounter in others and which strike them as isolated remnants that survive in the rationalised environment. What seems repellently alien is in fact the all too familiar: the infectious gestures of direct contacts suppressed by civilisation, for instance, touch, soothing, snuggling up, coaxing.¹

This fits in with Freud's general theory of emotion, in which emotion is the sedimented biological recollection of past gratification or its denial. Denial renders satisfaction ugly in the eyes of those who must do without it. Something like this notion lies behind the general expressionist tactic of exaggerating emotional gestures to the point where they become evocations of the primal. The expressionists generally concentrated on exaggerating negative emotions in images akin to tragic masks. An aphorism of Kafka's allows the connection of this attention to the exaggeration of negative expression to the theme of a quasi-messianic illumination introduced in my last chapter, by connecting gestural mimesis with its role in Greek drama through the metaphorical use of the idea of the mask. The Greeks used the concept of mimesis to describe the work of the mime artists who used exaggerated gestures and caricatured masks to push their mimicry in the direction of satire. Kafka's aphorism says 'Our art consists in being dazzled by the truth: the light upon the grotesque mask as it shrinks back is true, and nothing else.'²

Through their excessive facial reliefs, certain expressions capture a light that is otherwise invisible. These expressions are not true in themselves, but allow interpretation to proceed. Kafka's work is the mask,

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.181-182.

²Kafka, *Collected Aphorisms*, p.15.

the stylised representation of the reality of expression as a contorted exaggeration which nonetheless aims at the truth:

expressiveness is the painful echo of a superior power, of force, voiced in a complaint. It is always exaggerated, however honest it may be, since the whole world seems to be enclosed in every plaintive note - as in every work of art.¹

Like psychoanalysis, Kafka brings these unconsciously mimetic operations out into the open through a rational intervention, the construction of the work, the mask whose surface casts illuminating shadows. This constructively rational moment is vital. In order to have a critical force the mimetic impulse must be torn away from its natural immediacy. It has to be consciously developed, sublated through the actions of the ratio it is to shatter in the process, without losing the expressive dimension. Art is 'mimesis driven to the point of self consciousness,' yet 'is nevertheless bound up with feeling, with the immediacy of experience; otherwise it would be indistinguishable from science.'²

The 'unity-founding, organising element'³ has to involve conception, but the aim of this conceptual moment is to bring the mimetic element into view alongside it. This aesthetic ideal instantiates the philosophical project of *Negative Dialectics*: 'to use concepts to unseal the non-conceptual.'⁴ This firmly separates Adorno from romantic and intuitive accounts of artistic mimesis. As Hullot-Kentor reminds us:

It is naive to say so, but there is no art without reason, e.g. no symphony orchestra without the invention of that

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.182.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.259.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.55.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.10.

ingenious axle that connects one or several keys on woodwinds; Francis Bacon throws paint onto his canvases, but nothing would appear in these splashes without the technique that is brought to bear on them.¹

Adorno's separation of aesthetic comportment from instrumental science is not meant to deny the complex relation of aesthetic laws to scientific ones. The dialectic between art and science is like the dialectic within art between mimesis and constructive rationality: 'Science and art are not to be fused, but the categories that are valid in each are not absolutely different. Conformist consciousness prefers the opposite.'² If art and science were completely separate, art could not criticise science. Modernist art could not have come into being in a less technological age, whatever its debt to primitive art. That art and science are both sublimations of mimesis, but with differing relations to praxis, sets them into a more bitter struggle:

Art is not an arbitrary cultural complement to science but, rather, stands in critical tension to it. When, for instance, the cultural and human sciences are rightly accused of a lack of spirit, this is almost always at the same time a lack of aesthetic discernment. It is not without reason that the certified sciences demand furiously to be left in peace whenever art, whatever they attribute to it, intervenes in their sphere; that someone can write is cause for suspicion on scientific grounds.³

The quality of a work of art may be determined by the degree to which it succeeds in articulating a dialectical movement between the two poles of mimesis and rationality, rather than collapsing into one or the other:

¹Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno', p.24.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.231-232. Also see note 2, p.202 of this thesis.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.231. This suspicion has certainly been periodically levelled at Freud, who is accused of seducing his readers with his limpid narratives.

In the case of such exemplary artists of the epoch as Schoenberg, Klee and Picasso, the expressive mimetic element and the constructive element are of equal intensity, not by seeking a happy mean between them but rather by way of the extremes.¹

Adorno identifies the mimetic interpenetration of subject and object as typical of both Kafka and Klee:

The boundary between what is human and the world of things becomes blurred. This forms the basis of the frequently noted affinity with Klee. Kafka called his writing 'scribbling'. The thinglike becomes a graphic sign; his spellbound figures do not determine their actions but rather behave as if each had fallen into a magnetic field.²

Adorno is presumably comparing Kafka's literary productions with those of Klee's paintings which are made up of untranslatable symbols. These shapes are abstractions from animal and human figures, and appear as a sort of mimetic protowriting. Adorno says of Kafka, perhaps alluding to K.'s failure to properly carry out his duties as school-assistant in *The Castle*, 'the rents and deformations of the modern age are in [Kafka's] eyes traces of the stone age; the chalk figures on yesterdays blackboard, left unerased, become the true cave drawings.'³

At several such points in 'Notes on Kafka,' Adorno applies theories of visual aesthetics to Kafka's writing. According to Adorno, Kafka transfers 'the practices of expressionist painting to literature [...] Many decisive parts in Kafka read as though they had been written in imitation of expressionist paintings which should have been painted but never were.'⁴ It is certainly true that Kafka regularly describes striking patterns of

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.257.

²Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.262.

³Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.260.

⁴Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.264.

light in dramatic tableaux which recall the exaggerated chiaroscuro vital to the emotion in certain expressionist paintings and woodcuts. Adorno goes on to identify one such scene: the climactic execution of K. at the end of *The Trial*. Poor K. is killed in the dark pit of a quarry, looking up at the light from a window where a silhouetted figure briefly appears and stretches out its arms. Also typical is K.'s fleeting glance into a tin-worker's workshop earlier on in *The Trial*, as the middle-class K. hurries through a dirty and disturbing proletarian quarter on his way to see Titorelli:

The door of the workshop was open; three apprentices were standing in a half circle around some object on which they were beating with their hammers. A great sheet of tin hanging on the wall cast a pallid light, which fell between two of the apprentices and lit up their faces and aprons.¹

If this was painted by an expressionist, the pallid light on the faces of the workers would no doubt be exaggerated and distorted to produce a hellish effect. Photo-realism was never the goal of expressionist artworks. Their exaggerations are their truth, just like the masks of the mime artists. It is the manipulation of the simple reflection of the world that produces expression. The need for a manipulated access to art's inner structure is the condition of art's truth in a false totality incapable of instantiating that truth. In their alienation from society, in their uselessness, artworks challenge the principle of practical use, becoming true only to themselves. This fidelity allows artworks to appear as 'plenipotentiaries of things that are no longer distorted by exchange, profit and the false needs of a degraded humanity. In the context of total semblance, art's semblance of being-in-itself is the mask of truth.'² Art may rely on illusion, just as a mask is not a face, but this does not stop it articulating a truth content: 'in

¹Kafka, *The Trial*, p.156.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.227.

face of the lie of the commodity world, even the lie that denounces it becomes a corrective.'¹

Adorno's notion of theoretically tearing reality into a new shape prompted by its own repressed qualities comes not only out of cubist and surrealist theories of collage and montage, but also out of what Hullot-Kentor calls Adorno's 'Hegelian Psychoanalysis.'² The term 'psychoanalysis' puts the emphasis on this dismantling, rather than on the rebuilding, which is to prompt itself. Laplanche, although not commenting on Adorno, makes clear the element of psychoanalysis of most relevance to an understanding of Adorno: 'The method is ana-lytic in the true sense of the term, associative-dissociative, unbinding.'³

Hullot-Kentor explains Adorno's similar focus on aesthetic dismantlement: 'Art works take themselves apart as they put themselves together and as they do so the progressive Hegelian dialectic is brought to a standstill in a moment of expression.'⁴ Analysands, like artworks, have to 'take themselves apart as they put themselves together.' Modernist art puts aside easy synthesis in order to allow traces of unreconciled experiences or thoughts to emerge in the viewer's mimetic reaction to them. The viewer must attempt to read themselves into the marks the work impresses upon them, marks only visible when the work blots out the everyday horizon of consciousness. Similarly, the analysand must find

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.44. This is presumably why Zuidervaat's book on Adorno's aesthetics is subtitled *The Redemption of Illusion*.

²R. Hullot-Kentor (1992), 'Notes on *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: Translating the Odysseus Essay', in *New German Critique*, no. 56, Spring-Summer 1992, pp.101-108, p.104.

³Laplanche, 'Psychoanalysis as Antihermeneutics', p.10. In Chapter Three of *Perversion and Utopia*, 'Synthesis as Violence: Lacan and Adorno on the Ego,' pp.119-164, J. Whitebook clearly outlines Adorno's uneasy feelings about premature reconciliation, and their relation to Freud's critique of hasty psychosynthesis. But Whitebook is himself unhappy with the rigidity of Lacan and Adorno's ban on synthesis. Analysands may have to take themselves apart but, somehow, they have to put themselves together again. Whitebook accordingly allows himself a reconciling concept of sublimation banned by Adorno's negative method.

⁴Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno,' p.26.

themselves again in traumatic scars so long avoided that nothing less than the dismantlement of screen memories can allow them to emerge. The analysand has to interpret their own symptoms and dreams in the same spirit of free association that is the prerequisite for the proper reception of modernist art. If the interpretation of dreams allows access to the hidden history of the individual, then the interpretation of expressionist art may allow access to a hidden history of the human race. As in Hegel's *Phenomenology*, what appears to be subjectivity turns out to be objectivity. Clearly illustrating this Hegelian-psychoanalytic aesthetic of expression, Adorno notes of Kafka:

His power is one of demolition. He tears down the soothing facade to which a repressive reason increasingly conforms. In the process of demolition [...] he does not stop at the subject as does psychology, but drives through to the bare material existence that emerges in the subjective sphere.¹

This emergence is the return of repressed mimetic traces in a conscious artistic sublimation, but the return of mimesis is by no means automatically a good thing. My account of Adorno's aesthetic has focused on the need to temper mimesis with reflective rationality. The next section examines what happens when this self-conscious reflection is absent, by focusing on Adorno's critique of the unconscious return of mimesis in fascist impulses.

¹Adorno, 'Notes on Kafka', p.252.

IV: The Dark Side of Mimetic Rebellion.

In 'Elements of Anti-Semitism,' the final chapter of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer confirm their Freudianism by showing that the return of repressed mimesis is not in-itself progressive. The process of repression imposes a complex distortion on the atrophied mimetic impulses of the ego-weak modern individual. The distorted mimetic impulse seeks covert forms of discharge, rendering individuals susceptible to the manipulations of authoritarian irrationalism, which offer potential outlets for the thwarted libido. Adorno and Horkheimer do not hesitate to call these outlets infantile, showing that they do not romanticise childhood as a state of purely receptive or sympathetic mimesis. If art retains something of the wonderingly open side of childlike cognition, then fascism is a repetition of the closed and violent tantrum of the childish bully: 'In Fascism the nightmare of childhood has come true.'¹

In anti-Semitic authoritarianism of the type focused on by Adorno and Horkheimer, rigidly conformist defences against the lure of what has been renounced operate through a falsely projective hatred of those who, either really or only in the mind of the projector, have not made similar renunciations:

No matter what the Jews as such may be like, their image, as that of the defeated people, has the features to which totalitarian domination must be completely hostile: happiness without power, wages without work, a home without frontiers, religion without myth. These

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.193. This section makes it clear that Adorno was beaten up as a child at least once, for being a clever Jew, and the incident perhaps lies behind Adorno's proposal (in T.W. Adorno (1941), 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism: Idea of the Project', in (1994) *The Stars Down to Earth*, pp.135-161) for an experimental film portraying such an incident as a way of investigating anti-Semitism.

characteristics are hated by the rulers because the ruled secretly want to possess them.¹

The cunning but psychologically isolated Nazi who celebrates an ideological image of the close-knit Aryan family whilst dreaming of submitting his grandmother to the euthanasia programme, accuses the Jews of clannish scheming and baby-eating. False projection is conceptualised by Adorno as being a type of substitute mimesis. This mimics mimesis, producing an illusion of similarity between the inner world of the authoritarian subject and the outer world of reality, by overwhelming reality with a solipsistically subjective structure. This becomes a mad equivalent of a God-like feeling of total creative power, a hollow mockery of the Jewish divinity. Richard King explains the idea:

the mind normally engages the world through a process of balancing perception and conception, receptivity and activity, or in their [Adorno and Horkheimer's] terms 'mimesis' and 'projection.' Alluding both to Kant and Gestalt psychology, they suggested that projection, the imposition of a frame or order upon perception, is in normal cases accompanied by the self-correcting, shaping capacity of reflection: 'reflection, the life of reason, takes place as conscious projection.' The problem arises, however, when projection fails to be corrected by reflection. The result is the 'false projection.' What makes anti-Semitism 'morbid' is precisely the false projection at its core. That is, the anti-Semitic personality is a paranoiac one for whom domination, the result of false projection, is an end in itself: 'he makes everything in his own image.'²

Here Adorno and Horkheimer accept the conventional Freudian theory of projection rejected earlier on in the *Dialectic*, when they denied

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.199. This is the reversal of Freud I mentioned in Chapter two, Section II.

²King, 'Culture and Barbarism', p.22 References to Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.188, 187.

that it provided an adequate explanation of primitive magical cognition. Their acceptance of Freud's terms here means that, in a way, the fascistic mimesis of mimesis is being identified as more mythic than myth. A subject has historically split off from nature, so a projective reunification with nature via domination of it is now a real possibility. This quasi-mythic unity is a technocratic parody of the truly reconciled state, for which it refuses to wait:

This is the negative aspect of reconciliation. Reconciliation is the highest notion of Judaism, and expectation is its whole meaning. The paranoiac reaction arises from inability to expect. The anti-Semites try to realize their negative absolute by their own power, and change the world into the hell which they always thought it was.¹

This reverses the mimetic impulse: 'Mimesis imitates the environment, but false projection makes the environment like itself.'² This "project" is a regressive mental version of the technological domination of nature. Hence the 'peculiarly fascist combination of the archaic and the modern, the symbolic and the rational, the primitive and the technological, the primordial and the up-to date.'³ The strange combination is facilitated by the correspondence between instrumental science and the instrumental side of magic. For example, they both share the tendency to "frame" a segment of reality useful for practical purposes, cutting it off from its own potential affinities with everything else. The early magicians and augurs drew real or imaginary frames around the area of reality selected for divinatory or magical purposes. Reaching to the sky with a staff and tracing a frame facilitated interpretation of the cloud formations and bird flights across and in it. Freud's phantasy of directly

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.199.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.187.

³King, 'Culture and Barbarism,' p.22.

influencing clouds to produce rain is a similar act of instrumentally selective framing, cutting off the cloud from its eco-systemic affinities.

Adorno uses the idea of the magic circle to define the reflective limit of technology, which is traced out by the demands of practical utility and profit, its own up-to-date staff of wisdom. The positivist conception of the object is paranoid in its insistence that its project of control is value-free:

As today practical scientific enterprises require an unimpaired faculty of definition - the capability of arresting thought at a point determined by the needs of society, and of defining an area which is then minutely examined without going beyond it, so the paranoiac cannot transcend a complex of interests delimited by his psychological fate. His discernment is used up in the circle drawn by the fixed idea, just as human ingenuity is liquidated in the area determined for it by technical civilization. Paranoia is the dark side of cognition.¹

The project of control, which according to Freud sublimates the death instincts, involves a suppression of the sympathetic-erotic side of mimesis. The yearning to give up the effort of separation from mother earth, a phylogenetic repetition of the child's eroticised wish to return to the womb, threatens the new-found freedom from natural ties. These tabooed desires constantly seek expression. This is the meaning ascribed by Adorno and Horkheimer² to those episodes of the *Odyssey* in which Odysseus, having controlled himself, has to control the regressive mimetic tendencies of his unruly crew in order to ensure their continued capacity to labour for him. The oarsmen seek uncivilised bliss on the island of the lotus-eaters, become swine, and finally all die as a result of their inability to spare the sacred cattle of the sun god. In these acts, the

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.195.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Chapters One and Two, and see Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p.401-402.

crew fail in the basic task of civilisation, that of deferring gratification, instead freely submitting to their mimetic desire to return to a state of nature. This regressive desire is ultimately satisfied absolutely through death, the instinctual goal of the shadowy Thanatos.

Adorno and Horkheimer's examination of anti-Semitism shifts the analytical focus onto the question of what happens to these desires in a later historical period in which the yoke of civilisation, represented by Odysseus, has been carried longer and fits better. Yet the modern individual still yearns to throw it off, as is made clear in the constant worries, voiced by the industrial and political elite and those psychologically identified with them, about the lazy, immoral and primitive tendencies of the masses, who endanger their capacity for labour in the unrestrained pursuit of gratification, through sex, drugs and criminal violence. Those who express these worries most loudly are often the potential supporters of fascism, as Adorno's F-Scale makes clear enough. Their worry is a negative trace of their own desire to join in the transgression of civilised norms. Fascist political systems allow such a transgression through inviting the conformist to attack those identified as immoral.¹

The mimesis of mimesis which tempts the technocratically paranoid fascist consciousness is explicated along more or less orthodox Freudian lines in Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of the relation of the sense of smell to the progress of civilisation. They add a unique twist by adding in a consideration of perhaps the most basic anti-Semitic stereotype: that of the big-nosed Jew. I have already discussed the importance of the olfactory in Adorno's recollections of childhood

¹Pecora clearly sets out the dialectics of repressed mimesis in his paper 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', pp.122-125.

(Chapter One, Section V). Smell is presented by Adorno as the most mimetic of the senses:

The multifarious nuances of the sense of smell embody the archetypal longing for the lower forms of existence, for direct unification with circumambient nature, with the earth and mud. Of all the senses, that of smell - which is attracted without objectifying - bears clearest witness to the urge to lose oneself in and become the 'other.'¹

The stereotype of the big nose is deployed as part of the notion that the Jews are a sensual and hedonistic race, but a secret envy² - a classic reaction-formation - lies at the heart of this image. The idea that the Jews are a form of pollution to be fumigated out of existence is a distorted wish to breathe the heady air the anti-Semite imagines the Jew greedily sucks in with their oversized nostrils. An old anti-Semitic joke puts it like this: "Why do Jews have big noses? Because air is free." Adorno lets us turn such jokes against their originators: 'As a despised and despising characteristic, the mimetic function is enjoyed craftily. Anyone who seeks out "bad" smells, in order to destroy them, may imitate sniffing to his heart's content, taking unrationalized pleasure in the experience.'³

While this is pure Freud, in that it describes a reactive substitute gratification which actually services the desire it pretends to condemn, it is also apparently a reversal of Freud's theory that the anti-Semite resents the Jew's capacity for renunciation, as demonstrated in their development of an imageless religion (see Chapter Two, Section II). Adorno and Horkheimer are seemingly suggesting instead that it is a Jewish absence of renunciation that is envied. But the contradiction is only apparent, and the authors of the *Dialectic* try to bring both sides together. Because the

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.

²Recalling the joke: "Big nose, big dick?"

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.

image of the Jew is partially phantasised, it exhibits the capacity for contradiction characteristic of the Unconscious. The Jews

are thought to lag behind advanced civilization and yet to be too far ahead of it: they are both clever and stupid, similar and dissimilar. They are declared guilty of something which they, as the first burghers, were the first to overcome: the lure of base instincts, reversion to animality and to the ground, the service of images. Because they invented the concept of kosher meat, they are persecuted as swine.¹

This looks like the tactic identified by King² as the usual dialectical pursuit of having it both ways. But this can be positively reframed: it would not be inaccurate to describe the concept of dialectical sublation as a philosophical urge to have one's cake and eat it, especially a Marxist version of the dialectic predicated on the utopia of a post-scarcity society in which the amount of cake and its distribution will presumably not be an issue. However, to see the dualisms at work in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as being dialectical in origin is not strictly accurate, whether one takes the term as useful or not. Adorno's dialectic is an attempt to escape dualistic thinking. The dualisms here are Freudian in derivation. Freud is guilty of a rigid tendency to split things into dichotomies, and he was uncomprehending towards Hegel and the concept of dialectical development.³ This concept of development seeks to unfold the larger unity to which both sides of a contradiction can be shown to belong, and is as such more sophisticated than Freud's tendency to hypostatise his ultimately metaphysical dualisms. I would say that the relations Freud struggles to fit into his fragile dichotomies can be more successfully

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.186.

²King, 'Culture and Barbarism,' p.8.

³S. Freud (1933), *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, republished (1991) as PFL 2, p.213-4

explicated using dialectical reason of the type deployed by Adorno and Horkheimer, and that such a recasting is part of the goal of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

In 1933 Freud actually gestured towards a rather Frankfurt School conception of social science and its relation to Marxism, in the same essay in which he claims not to comprehend dialectics. Freud is discussing the relations between nature, psyche, culture and economy. His conclusion is ultimately psychologistic, but he nevertheless sketches out a concern for a totality of levels of analysis:

If anyone were in a position to show in detail the way in which these different factors - the inherited human disposition, its racial variations and its cultural transformations - inhibit and promote one another under the conditions of social rank, profession and earning capacity - if anyone were able to do this, he would have supplemented Marxism so that it was made into a genuine social science. For sociology too, dealing as it does with the behaviour of people in society, cannot be anything but applied psychology.¹

Three years earlier, in his first lecture as director of the Institute for Social Research, Horkheimer had asked:

What relations can we delineate between a particular social group and the role of this group in the economy, the changes in the psychical structure of its members, and the thoughts and institutions created by it which influence it as a whole through the social totality?²

The introduction of psychoanalysis was the chief novelty in Horkheimer's programme, and this had led in 1929 to the founding of the

¹Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, p.216.

²M. Horkheimer (1930), 'The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy and the Tasks of an Institute for Social Research,' in S.E. Bronner and D.M. Kellner (1989), *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader*, New York: Routledge, pp.25-36, p.34.

first psychoanalytic institute attached to a university, accommodated in Frankfurt School offices.¹ Freud expressed his thanks to Horkheimer for his involvement in this development, rendering it possible that Freud's later reference to a psychologically attuned development of Marxism was actually a reference to the Frankfurt School itself. But Horkheimer's earlier formulation is more confident than Freud's about the causal direction of the relations between society, culture and psyche. Horkheimer shows a recursively dialectical appreciation of the feedback loop between structure and agency. The idea that the economically determined psychic formations of key social groups produce institutions which rebound on those formations does not go far beyond Freud, but does show a dialectical comprehension of the organising force of culturally coagulated alienated labour. This comprehension is only latent in Freud's sociological speculations about the super-ego's roots in authority relations. We could therefore reverse Freud's point, and say that the addition of Marxism rescues psychoanalysis rather than vice versa, but the Frankfurt School idea is to escape the either-or through a dialectical unfolding of the social transformations of instinct.

In 'Elements of Anti-Semitism,' this dialectic is developed using an obscure discussion of idiosyncrasy: 'The old answer of all the anti-Semites is an appeal to idiosyncrasy.'² This remains hazy until one considers Freud's theory of organ pleasure,³ according to which each part of the body is capable of generating an erotic urge and physical reaction based on the pursuit of gratification in a direct response to external nature. Idiosyncratic responses to the exterior world may bypass the ego entirely. We are all familiar with the folk-psychological notion of someone being ruled by

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.54. Also see Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.1-2, and Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p.111.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.179.

³See Laplanche and Pontalis, *Language of Psychoanalysis*, p.290-291.

their stomach or genitals, and the term idiosyncrasy is generally used to describe the particular instinctual dispositions which seem to characterise individuals. The tummy which rumbles at the smell of food embarrasses the ego. Adorno and Horkheimer use the concept to cover other automatically mimetic physical responses to nature:

In idiosyncrasy, individual organs escape from the control of the subject, and independently obey fundamental biological stimuli. The ego which experiences such reactions - for instance cutaneous or muscular torpor, or stiffness of joints - is not wholly in control of itself. For a few moments these reactions effect an adaptation to circumambient, motionless nature.¹

The control of nature starts within the self, in the ego's struggle to overcome the body's automatic reactions (Freud mentions 'the child's efforts to gain control over his own limbs'²). That overcoming eventually relies on using a sublimation, rather than a negation, of the mimetic faculty to understand and manipulate nature outside the self. The conquest of nature within must predate conquest without. Dragging one's self to work can feel like a battle with elemental forces, and these theories suggest that in a sense, it is. In Freudo-Marxist terms, the individual struggle to defer the gratification of immediate organ pleasure is also a world-historical down-payment on a future free from such deferment, a world which would free need from automatism. When needs can be met, they are able to creatively transform themselves in a dialectic of development opening up something qualitatively new. But under late

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.180. Artists and critical theorists must appropriate their idiosyncratic reactions to the world as material for reflection. See Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.261-262.

²S. Freud (1915), 'Instincts and their Vicissitudes,' in *On Metapsychology* (PFL 11), pp.105-138, p.127.

capitalism, this end has been forgotten. The deeper layers of the battle are eventually rendered unconscious:

In the bourgeois mode of production, the indelible mimetic heritage of all practical experience is consigned to oblivion. The pitiless prohibition of regression becomes mere fate; the denial is now so complete that it is no longer conscious.¹

When the deferral seems endless, the struggle seems harder, and any reminder of a different way of proceeding becomes a terrible threat:

Every 'other' person who 'doesn't know his place' must be forced back within his proper confine - those of unrestricted terror. Anyone who seeks refuge must be prevented from finding it; those who express ideas which all long for, peace, a home, freedom - the nomads and players - have always been refused a homeland.²

The expressive masks of the players and the caricature of exaggerated Jewish facial features are both reminders of the direct mimetic response to nature, and here Adorno and Horkheimer escape the undialectical position of simply concurring with the fascistic judgement that the Jews are closer to nature, whilst reframing it positively. Instead Adorno produces the dialectical insight which materialistically counter-balances the seemingly idealist thesis that the anti-Semite creates the Jew. This counter-balancing involves the same theoretical shift Adorno uses to appropriate Nietzsche's critique of conformist femininity and herd morality (see Chapter Two, Section VII, and Chapter Four). The negative features of these types of consciousness are seen by Adorno as real wounds which provoke more of what caused them (including Nietzsche's

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.181.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.183. Modern societies still resentfully criminalise nomads, whilst paradoxically refusing to allow them to settle anywhere nice.

naturalistic condemnation). Once the heady flush of violence is passed, the sight of the wretched victim produces disgust. This may be another meaning of Adorno's conception of damaged life. 'Violence is even inflamed by the marks which violence has left on them.'¹ In other words, the anti-Semite does not only produce a projective image of the Jew, but his oppression dictates certain real aspects of Jewishness. One tangible and socially produced form of forced Jewishness is the basis of the third section of 'Elements of Anti-Semitism.' This examines the way the capitalist system, coupled with the old restrictions on land ownership and Jewish property, pushed many Jews into the circulation sector of the economy. This sector takes the blame for the rest of the economy when the worker has to hand over his wages: 'The merchant is the bailiff of the whole system and takes the hatred of others upon himself. The responsibility of the circulation sector for exploitation is a socially necessary pretence.'² In *The Authoritarian Personality*, Adorno mentions the example of 'anti-Semitic Negroes in Harlem who have to pay excessive rents to Jewish collectors.'³

Far more speculatively, Adorno and Horkheimer suggest that the marks of violence are not just visible whip-scars, or forced social roles, but might also be psycho-physical expressions mimetically written into the archaic inheritance and physiognomy of dominated races. At first, Adorno and Horkheimer leave open the question - phantasy or reality - of the status of various elements of the Western image of the Jew. They try to produce dialectical theory without deciding in advance whether the Jews have biological characteristics, socially produced characteristics, or no characteristics at all. In this, they are rather like the vacillating 'low scorers' on the F-Scale, who self-consciously wrestle with their perceptions

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.183.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.174.

³Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.356.

and their political ideologies, unsure whether it is politically correct to believe in Jewish traits. But in the end, unsurprisingly, a social dialectic wins out. If the Jews have envied and hated mimetic characteristics, they are not natural, but they have been around a long time:

undisciplined mimicry is the brand of the old form of domination, engraved in the living substance of the dominated and passed down by a process of unconscious imitation in infancy from generation to generation, from the down-at-heel Jew to the rich banker.¹

In the earlier draft for a 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism,' this idea of the mimetic inheritance of socially provoked racial characteristics is set out more clearly, in a way that clearly underlies the importance attached to gestures and unconscious reactions in Adorno's readings of literature. It amounts to a quasi-Lamarckian theory of racial differentiation through childhood imitation:

the greatest impression on the infant is made not by the meaning of the words but by the expression, the voice, the movements of the parent. The soul of learning is imitation. The child's faculty of imitating the expressions of adults is exceedingly subtle. He observes the most unnoticeable and subtle shades of their gestures. Thus it happens that inclinations, skills, anxieties which have long lost their real meaning leave their mark on the faces and the behavior of later generations. The development of this theory in detail can contribute not merely to a refutation of the race theory but to a positive replacement for it.²

The defensive mimetic characteristics of the oppressed provoke the wrath of those seeking to renounce mimesis altogether, and who end up unconsciously copying it themselves. Adorno says that to persecute

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p182.

²Adorno, 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism', p.155.

someone is the negative form of love, in that the object is similarly invested with libido.¹ Adorno here produces enigmatic insights into the shadowy union of sadism and masochism which produces a horrible identity between torturer and victim, 'who are indistinguishable in their grimace.'² These terrible grimaces are forms of idiosyncrasy: under the huge psychological pressure of the situation, psychological discharge, and perhaps a degree of mental mastery over the experience, is made through the expressions. The victim is forced into the role of natural object, and then hated for their closeness to nature. The aggressor gets close to what he condemns in himself through his projective persecution of the other, and his control is an illusion brought at the victim's expense. An illusion, because though he controls the victim, he has surrendered to the worst in himself, the dark side of mimesis. The snarl mimics the cry so the attacker can imagine his actions have been justifiably provoked, in a ghastly institutional repetition of the old lie told by grown-ups to children: "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you." His domination of the other finally repeats the pure unsublimated awfulness of natural law at the level of human relations, even if the torturer (like the authoritarian parent) thinks he is working in service of higher things. In late modern conditions, the social manipulation of such impulses on a grand scale allows the organisation of idiosyncratically compulsive reactions in service of political goals:

the mental energy harnessed by political anti-Semitism is this rationalised idiosyncrasy. All the pretexts over which the Führer and his followers reach agreement, imply surrender to the mimetic attraction without any open infringement of the reality principle - honourably, so to speak. They cannot stand the Jews yet imitate them.³

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.303.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.182.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.183.

This argument leads into Adorno and Horkheimer's discussion of smell. The fascist bloodhound sniffing out the deviants has the biggest nose of all. By exploiting the dark side of the mimetic faculty rationalised in organised idiosyncrasy, fascism 'seeks to make the rebellion of suppressed nature against domination directly useful to domination.'¹ This may be represented most obviously by Hitler's pseudo-impassioned gesticulations, a horribly uncanny repetition of the tantrum that the wily child maintains even though they could perhaps control it. A less extreme, but probably more crucial, type of rationalised idiosyncrasy is 'organised laughter,'² of which the anti-Semitic humour of fascist propaganda is one form. The passive laughter fostered by the culture industry is another. These forms of laughter level the potentially subversive element of mimesis embedded in mirth, by putting it into the service of social domination. Laughter is a way of escaping the civilised bounds of the ego and super-ego, but the energies channelled by this discharge mechanism can work for conformity or critique.

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.185.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.184.

V: Childhood, Comedy and Critique in Freud and Adorno.

The dual character of mimesis dogs the task of recovering laughter for critical purposes. But recover it we must: 'Adorno makes the point that without the recovery of the playful innocence achieved through the reconnection with the Other in oneself, one cannot become a human being capable of nonviolative relations to the Other.'¹

In his study of the influence of psychoanalysis on critical theory, David Baines examines the role of Freud's exploration of childhood play in the mimetic aesthetics of Adorno and Marcuse.² Usefully, Baines draws attention to an older theory of mimesis which influences all these theorists:

Arguably, Adorno, Marcuse and Freud display an acquaintance with an older psychological tradition in the history of aesthetics. Aristotle, in *On the Art of Poetry*, asserts, much as Freud does later, that imitation is a cognitive function of the human mind and one inborn in human beings as natural.³

Walter Benjamin confirms that in antiquity, as in psychoanalysis, infants were regarded as nearer the mimetic forces of nature than adults:

if the mimetic genius was really a life-determining force for the ancients, it is not difficult to imagine that the newborn child was thought to be in full possession of this gift,

¹Cornel, *The Philosophy of the Limit*, p.14.

²D. Baines (1992), *The Influence of Freudian Psychology on the Critical Theory of T.W. Adorno, M. Horkheimer and H. Marcuse*, Unpublished PhD MS, University of Nottingham, pp.358-373. In his chapters on aesthetics, Baines covers some of the ground traversed in this chapter of mine. However, Baines deliberately leaves aside 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' and does not draw the link between Freud's theory of play and his work on comedy, which is essential to my analysis in this section. This allows me to develop an alternative angle on the dialectics of mimesis.

³Baines, *The Influence of Freudian Psychology*, p.368.

and in particular to be perfectly moulded on the structure of cosmic being.¹

Adorno notes that the modern taboo on mimesis leads 'to the kind of teaching which does not allow children to behave as children.'² But Adorno's dialectic of mimesis and constructive rationality reminds us that he seeks to avoid simple 'back to childhood' or 'back to prehistory' motifs. Although he problematises the unreflective notion of progress which endorses the sublimation of mimicry in service of a greater control of nature through the unrestrained operations of the instinct for mastery, Adorno concedes the historical necessity of some subjective control over nature. This control should be reflectively oriented on liberating nature from its own dark side, as expressed socially in forms of domination such as anti-Semitism. Such control involves a mature conservation of the best of childhood expectation, which does not capitulate to unreflective regression. Adorno takes for granted the Marxist theory of a ripening of capitalist control as the precursor to a qualitative shift to a free society, as opposed to romantically endorsing a direct regression to primitive communism. Indeed, Adorno assumes the point of possible transformation has been reached, repressed, and forgotten in a rationality of means without end.

Art contributes to the restoration of a memory of possibility by repeating the historical process of control, the sacrifice of natural spontaneity, but at the level of self-consciousness. Unlike the real thing, art's sacrifice is accompanied by sorrow for its domination and is motivated by the expectation of something else. As Hullot-Kentor explains:

¹Benjamin, 'On the Mimetic Faculty,' p334.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.181.

In art, domination is able to become liberation, the truth of the whole, because the same process of the domination of nature that society carries out occurs within the art-work; the same sacrificial act of reason is carried out by art through its construction. The dialectic of enlightenment is the inner process of the art-work, and explicitly so in the Odysseus essay in which Odysseus appears as the allegorical figure of this process. However, whereas the sacrifices required by self-preservative reason in the actual domination of nature are silenced by the semblance of necessity woven by the principle of identity, art mourns the sacrifice it carries out.¹

So, although *Dialectic of Enlightenment* insists on a recollection of the cost of Odysseus's springing from natural ties, the telos of a reconciling homecoming which is not a simple immersion in nature is not abandoned. As an allegorical historiography of the human race, Odysseus's journey home is also a story of the child's path to maturity. In the Greek tradition, the mimetic capacities of children equip them to take on the positive characteristics of their adult exemplars, but also render them vulnerable to negative influences. This led to the development of a whole moral pedagogy of mimesis, which arguably reaches its zenith in the murder of Socrates, that archetypal bad influence on the young men of Athens. The problem with the pedagogy of imitation is that it is based on a repetition of the existent. Socrates dared to produce critique, which expects something different, based on an assessment of present lack and the need for an alternative model. In this Socrates is refining and rendering critical the potential of mimesis, rationally deploying the imagination's capacity to produce images which can be said to be imitations of a possible future which does not yet exist. Freudian theory adds to this the notion that this lack, and the utopia that negates it, will be judged on a comparison with childhood expectations. The capacity to expect, and to work towards that

¹Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno,' p.25.

expectation, depends on the capacity for phantasy. As Baines explains, 'phantasy is an ideational structure, being the form of a wish or desire, and having reference to a threefold concept of time; the phantasy takes us back to the original wish, in the present, as it imagines a future possibility.'¹

Yet phantasy walks a tightrope between facilitating change through imaginative creation, and developing into an all-encompassing substitute gratification, an inward compensation for the external thwarting of satisfaction. Phantasy is based on expectation, but when expanded into the dominant principle, it gives up expectation and creates the world it wants in a full-blown delusion. This is the mechanism behind the fascistic false projection discussed in the last section. Art works in the same way, but instead of acting out its phantasy through a domination of others, it tyrannises over itself, trying to work the phantasy through by creating the work, not a paranoid reality. The childhood origins of these related mechanisms in fascism and art connect the dialectics of mimesis with Adorno's ideas on the rationalised idiosyncrasy of sadistic laughter, Freud's theory of comedy and the utopian regressions of Proust and Kafka.

Freud's theory of 'ideational mimetics'² can be used to unpack elements of Adorno's philosophical-literary adoption of Kafkaesque and Proustian tropes. Freud's theory was originally worked out to decode the mechanism by which pleasure is produced through the automatic mental mimicry and judgement of comic movements by their observer. We empathise with the other, but distance ourselves as well. If someone trips up, we compare their poor performance with the better (read, more grown up) effort we imagine we might have made. Their botched movement is more wasteful of energy than our own imagined grace, and we note the difference in expenditure. This difference is burned off in superior

¹Baines, *The Influence of Freudian Psychology*, p.359.

²S. Freud (1905), *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (PFL 6), London: Penguin, pp.248-285

laughter to prevent it provoking conscious memories of our own childhood ungainliness. But the preconscious judgement relies on that memory:

'I laugh at a difference in expenditure between another person and myself, every time I rediscover the child in him.' Or, put more exactly, the complete comparison which leads to the comic would run: 'That is how he does it - I do it in another way - he does it as I used to do it as a child.' Thus the laughter would always apply to the comparison between the adult's ego and the child's ego.¹

Children eagerly enjoy this type of *schadenfreude* ('You've fallen down, I haven't'²) as soon as they can distance themselves from those even younger. They laugh at what would have once made them cry, in a defence against identification with the "fall guy." This can be taken a short step beyond Freud: If an adult sees a child enjoying another's misfortune, the adult can enjoy the fact that they have controlled (through superior super-ego development) the urge to laugh. The enjoyment comes through the same process of comparison outlined by Freud above. These ideational mimetics turn out to have a physical dimension, adding to the visceral element of Adorno's notion of mimesis.

Freud suggests (and physiological experiments to some extent confirm his notion) that the formation of an ideational image of external events involves a nervous innervation of the physical motor apparatus. If I see someone lift their arm, impulses stir in my own. The identification of this mechanism is an important contribution towards an explanation of the bodily sympathetic element of language, thought and emotion. This inner bodily mimicry of the other explains the depth of the competing pulls: towards feeling the other's pain, and distancing oneself from it

¹Freud, *Jokes*, p.289.

²Freud, *Jokes*, p.289.

through repudiation (recall the young Adorno's rage and tears at the sight of the wretched snow-shovellers (Chapter Two, Section I, above).

When applied to 'Adorno's Kafka,' this Freudian angle on the concept of mimesis acts as a corrective to readings of Adorno which seek to undialectically portray his position as being either *pro* or *anti* mimesis.¹ For example, if read through Adorno's aesthetic, the bodily transformations enacted in grisly detail in *The Metamorphosis* and *In the Penal Colony* illuminate the Janus-face of the human capacity for mimesis: one side expresses sympathetic communication, the other mocking superiority. Faced with the forced closeness to nature exhibited by both Gregor the beetle and the harrow's victim, different characters and narratively constructed reader positions respond (or invite response) in ways representative of the different varieties of mimesis under discussion here. In *The Metamorphosis*, all the characters, Gregor included, struggle with their civilised disgust at his degraded state. This disgust is a disgust at what they were once attracted by. Like the beetle, children are drawn by the scabrous and decayed. Gregor's sister responds to his transformation with sympathetic compassion tinged with mythic fear, but her position in the family is promoted by Gregor's decay. His father and employer both respond with the irritated and authoritarian anger of the man in control of himself who envies the neurotic's gain: working no more. The aged female servant treats Gregor the beetle with the indifferent professionalism common in care-worn care-workers, who end up reducing the afflicted to the status of just another bit of nature to be dealt with in the course of the day's alienated labour.

¹Usually, Adorno is seen as being pro-mimesis. This is the weak spot of Gebauer and Wulf's book on mimesis, which rather neglects the dark side. However, some take the opposite tack: J. O. Daniel, in 'Temporary Shelter: Adorno's Exile and the Language of Home,' describes Adorno as 'arguably the twentieth century's principal theorist of *anti* mimetic art' (p.26).

In the Penal Colony, the explorer is torn between sympathetic identification with the victim, and a defensive adoption of the detached gaze of the scientific colonial observer. The fanatical officer clearly exhibits the fascistic mimesis of mimesis in his sado-masochistic desire to share the refined death he believes the harrow bestows on its victims. His grimace really does become one with his victim's, but he fails to reach the peace he wishes for.

All these reactions play out contrasting elements of the mimetic capacities involved in both sympathy and sadism, and Kafka's trick is to manipulate the reader into contradictory identifications with all the perspectives offered. So, the final mimetic relationship exemplified by Kafka's work is his own constellation of the mimetic reactions with a constructive rationality allowing for the intensification of expression by forcing it on his readers, not confining it to his characters. He invites a mimetic response through the bewitching form of his texts. This uses a radical juxtaposition of perspectives, sometimes taking the form of pitting the open 'why?' of the childlike innocent against the moribund system of the grown-ups. At several points in Kafka's novels a bewildered K. is chided and laughed at by officials or well-adjusted citizens for his infantile questions about the opaque structures in which he is entangled.

Proust is similarly legendary for his capacity to push the reader through a complex series of identifications with the chameleon-like and elusive identity of the narrator. This is revealed as it develops through his oscillating mimetic responses to the different sides of the characters the narrator alternately identifies with and reactively condemns, in an ever shifting complex of social alliances mobilised by his fawning adoption of copied perspectives modelled on his newest infatuations. Via the character's discussions of the Dreyfus case, anti-Semitism and the question of Jewish assimilation become important themes in the shifting social

alliances in which the boy attempts to ground himself. Proust's connoisseur's sensitivity to the nuances of sadistically funny snobbish repartee is largely defensive, as is made painfully obvious through his willingness to expose his own fragility in the face of such judgements. This willingness is an artistic attempt at self-reflection. If comic mimesis can be traced to archetypal reactions such as laughing when someone falls, then Proust's reactions try to mimetically master the comedy of the social trip-up. Like Kafka's conscious openness to the Janus-face of mimesis, Proust validates Freud's conviction that the theory of ideational mimetics potentially has an application beyond the sphere of wit.¹

It is best to state here that a complete exegesis of Freud's analysis of jokes is beyond the scope of this section. Freud makes complex and interesting distinctions between jokes, jests, humour and comedy, but I neglect these and focus on certain aspects of his analysis of comic mimicry and his general speculations on the origin and function of the capacity for laughter. These clarify Adorno's notion of rationalised idiosyncrasy by showing how adult laughter is a compensation for childhood disappointment:

the euphoria which we endeavour to reach by these means is nothing other than the mood of a period of life in which we were accustomed to deal with our psychical work in general with a small expenditure of energy - the mood of our childhood, when we were ignorant of the comic, when we were incapable of jokes and when we had no need of humour to make us feel happy in our life.²

Childlike naiveté is funny in its credulity, and childlike expectations in an adult provoke worldly-wise condemnations of silliness. The charge of silliness is often levelled at any hint of a concept of utopia.

¹Freud, *Jokes*, p.253-254

²Freud, *Jokes*, p.302.

This relates to Adorno's interest in the disappointments of childhood.

Freud says that

In most of the instances which seem comic to an adult a child would probably feel only disappointment. We might, however, take the child's power of blissful expectation and credulity as a basis for understanding how we appear to ourselves comic 'as a child' when we meet with a comic disappointment.¹

Unwrapping a trick present which turns out to be an empty box would upset a child, who might respond with the violent movements of a tantrum, mimicking what they would like to do to the perpetrator. An adult might share the same initial response but, inured to the harsh ways of the world and versed in the ritual for converting the spastic and idiosyncratic motions of angry protest into the conforming laughter of self-depreciating humour which allows others to enjoy a comic spectacle, might shortly laugh at her or himself. The ego inflates itself and laughs at the infantile part of the self as a defence against the narcissistic wound: 'I am too big (too fine) to be distressed by these things.'² Those who learn to take their own disappointments with a forced smile may be irritated at anything less in others. Any protest against inequity could provoke violent comedy, or in the wrong social circumstances, simply violence. Oppressed people are always targeted by the accusation that they have a chip on their shoulder, and patted on the back if they can accept insult with good humour, displaying the socially organised masochism vital to the smooth running of the system.

In terms of the history of childhood, the mardy rebellions and depressive moods of adolescents not yet ready to accept the demands of modern adulthood, and still willing to claim a special insight into the state

¹Freud, *Jokes*, p.292.

²Freud, *Jokes*, p.299.

of things, come in for an especially knowing form of grown-up laughter. "Ask a teenager, while they still know everything," as the cutting joke goes. In such comedy, it is the adult who imagines he knows everything. Adorno discerns such a tendency in conformist psychoanalysis. In the section of his essay 'Sociology and Psychology' devoted to a discussion of 'Authoritarianism and Anna Freud,'¹ Adorno shows how she tries to praise the degree of social empathy in precocious but immature young people, but ends up condemning their idealism and poorly thought out non-conformity. He quotes her at some length and adds a critical retort which involves the theory of conformist laughter I am trying to explicate here. I repeat some of the quote from Anna Freud, and Adorno's retort:

'The fact that his [the young person's] understanding of and interest in the structure of society often far exceeds those of later years does not assist him in the least to find his true place in social life, nor does the many sidedness of his interests deter him from concentrating entirely on a single point - his preoccupation with his own personality.'

With such judgements psychoanalysis, which once set out to break the power of the father image, firmly takes the side of the fathers, who either smile at the children's high-faluting ideas with a droop at the corner of their mouths or else rely on life to teach them what's what, and who consider it more important to earn money than get silly ideas into one's head.²

Adorno's defence of the silly, impractical and self-centred adolescent with intellectual pretensions against the pragmatic adults who manage to smile while frowning is of course a defence of himself. Yet his dealings with the students of the sixties suggest that Adorno could not always detect his own repetition of such judgmental tendencies. The

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', pp.91-93.

²Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.92.

combination of seriousness and childlike behaviour was part of Adorno's work, as well as his personality:

a whole group of people who worked with Adorno at the Institute for Social Research [...] commented often on how strange it was how someone who wrote 'like that,' who worked with such intense seriousness, could at other times be so *albern* (silly, absurd).¹

Adorno's measured defence of childlike silliness shows that there is a side to laughter other than its organised and manipulated form. This side of Adorno's critical theory and personality wrestles with the intellectual dilemma identified in *Minima Moralia* : 'to become one more grown-up, or to remain a child.'² This concern counters the "doom and gloom" stereotype of Adorno's work, and explains why the students were so interested in him in the first place. Hullot-Kentor has clarified one textual reason for this neglect of Adorno's playful side, through his correction of the standard English translation of *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. In a key passage, Adorno and Horkheimer are explicating the expiatory comedy offered to the gods in the cunning puns of the prophecies. The double meanings promote self-reflection, even when forced, because their shift requires reflection before providing the comic release. This is obscured in the current translation which says of this reflection 'through laughter blind nature becomes aware of itself as it is, and thereby surrenders itself to the power of destruction.'³ Hullot-Kentor points out that

If reflection were the catalyst of destructiveness, the whole of Adorno's thought would be senseless. Adorno in fact

¹Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno,' p.11.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.133.

³Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. J. Cumming, p.77.

wrote the opposite: in the self-consciousness of its laughter blind nature '*gives up its destructive force.*'¹

This self-conscious laughter is the sort painfully produced in Kafka and Proust.

These interpretative methods can be turned back onto Adorno, using an application of Freud's concept of comic mimesis to unlock elements of Adorno's own melancholic and aphoristic clowning in *Negative Dialectics* and *Minima Moralia*. As Gillian Rose² has shown, the playful side of Adorno relies on a characteristically dark use of exaggeration, overstatement, irony and chiasmus, which sober critics often want to dismiss as a dialectical excess, and which I have already related to Kafka:

[P]hilosophy contains a playful element which the traditional view of it as science would like to exorcise [...] The un-naïve thinker knows how far he remains from the object of his thinking, and yet he must always talk as though he had it entirely. This brings him to the point of clowning. He must not deny his clownish traits, least of all since they alone can give him what is denied him. Philosophy is the most serious of things, but then again it is not all that serious.³

Freud's theory of comedy can show how Adorno's writing tries to divert the energy that usually seeks discharge through laughter into other channels, by using some of the mechanisms of play to draw us in. This conceptual Judo uses the force of the idiosyncrasy it seeks to free from organised irrationalism. In Judo, as in immanent critique, the energy of the attacking move is used to defeat it. The idiosyncrasy must be 'elevated

¹Hullot-Kentor, 'Back to Adorno,' p.28.

²Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, pp.17-26.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.14.

into a concept and become aware of its own futility.¹ Adorno plays the theoretical buffoon to make us think seriously. Freud suggests comedy protects releases of libido from critical reflection and appropriation, in order to burn them off as laughter. Adorno's critical theory seeks to reverse this process. Freud notes that yields of comic pleasure must be isolated from reflection: 'Whatever brings a psychical process into connection with others operates against the discharge of the surplus cathexis and puts it to some other use; whatever isolates a psychical act encourages discharge.'²

Adorno's constellation of playful and witty pleasure with reflective considerations and painful topics makes another use of laughter, by shattering its isolation. Freud's intriguing analysis of comedy as a symptom of the forced renunciation of childhood pleasures has it that we can laugh at what we once hoped for, only by forgetting that this is why we laugh at childlike disappointment. Adorno makes laughter tail off by reminding us of the pain of the renunciation behind humour. This way of approaching Adorno's work clarifies the importance of a psychoanalytic framework in his critique of the substitute gratifications offered by the culture industry, which produce the terrible laughter of the apathetic spectator, as well as the more actively barbaric anti-Semitic laughter. The scattered remarks on childhood and education in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* can be integrated through Adorno's critique of the culture industry. The 'infantile play' of the latter 'has scarcely more than the name in common with the productivity of children.'³ The childish laughter of the culture industry, which draws its strength from an identification with the grown-up power of conformity, can be contrasted

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.179-180.

²Freud, *Jokes*, p.289.

³Adorno, 'On the Fetish-Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', p.295-296.

with the childlike laughter at outwitting that power. Safe in its special places, the child chuckles along with nature, free from the demand to spring from it. The organised pleasures marketed so heavily to an ever younger audience colonise such openness with substitutes:

Conciliatory laughter is heard as the echo of an escape from power; the wrong kind overcomes fear by capitulation to the forces which are to be feared. It is the echo of power as something inescapable. Fun is a medicinal bath. The pleasure industry never fails to prescribe it. It makes laughter the instrument of the fraud practised on happiness.¹

In a short section of *Aesthetic Theory*, 'The Mimetic and the Ridiculous,' Adorno tries to outwit organised laughter by rescuing a critical role for the ridiculous in art, akin to his defence of philosophical play. Reflection is the key:

The ridiculous, as a barbaric residuum of something alien to form, misfires in art if art fails to shape and reflect it. If it remains on the level of the childish and is taken for such, it merges with the calculated *fun* of the culture industry.²

Yet Adorno states that he prefers the self-conscious childlikeness of Mozart's *Magic Flute* to the grave metaphysics of Wagner's *Ring*. Adorno's willingness to be condemned as childish for daring to hold onto the childlike is the mark of artistic maturity, and a few selections from this section of Adorno's last work shows how this theme brings together the various dialectics operating in his theory: dialectics of mimesis and constructive rationality; of secular theology; of sexual happiness; of

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.140.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.119.

childhood and maturity; of enlightenment; of natural and human suffering and its possible negation in the joy of transfigured life:

The rationality of artworks becomes spirit only when it is immersed in its polar opposite. The divergence of the constructive and the mimetic, which no artwork can resolve and which is virtually the original sin of aesthetic spirit, has its correlative in that element of the ridiculous and clownish.

[...]

The ridiculous in art, which philistines recognize better than those who are naïvely at home in art, and the folly of a rationality made absolute indict one another reciprocally; incidentally, when viewed from the perspective of the praxis of self-preservation, happiness - sex - is equally ridiculous, as can be spitefully pointed out by anyone who is not driven by it.

[...]

In its clownishness, art consolingly recollects prehistory in the primordial world of animals. Apes in the zoo together perform what resembles clown routines. The collusion of children with clowns is a collusion with art, which adults drive out of them just as they drive out their collusion with animals. Human beings have not succeeded in so thoroughly repressing their likeness to animals that they are unable in an instant to recapture it and be flooded with joy; the language of little children and animals seems to be the same.¹

This idea of mimetic communication between child and animal is an image of reconciliation with nature, and Adorno's idea that adults can still recall such affinities provides a foothold for critical art on the polished monolith of consumer entertainment. These ideas in Adorno are the type of thoughts that prompt an unease which may be understood using the idea that mimetic closeness is under a taboo. Cornel says the closeness is

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.119.

'soft' and tender.¹ Such words are nowadays more shocking than the banal repetitions of trendy transgressivism. It takes a brave theorist to talk of tenderness in philosophy, which raises its puzzled eyebrows, even when sympathetic. Take these remarks of Alford's, who does not seem to have read *Aesthetic Theory* - remarks which reproduce Habermas's influential worry about the ineffable character of the concept of mimesis:

Mimesis, says Habermas, implies a snuggling, imitative, highly sympathetic relationship, one which when applied to nature is little more than a "cipher." That is, it is extremely unclear what sort of actual relationship to nature could give mimesis content, unless one thinks in terms of hugging one's housepets and the like. Mimesis appears to be an impulse without an appropriate object.²

That Alford's throwaway comment comes so close to Adorno's remarks on the ridiculous in art shows that he is actually along the right lines with the childlike image of hugging a pet. A few pages after the section on the ridiculous in *Aesthetic Theory*, Adorno takes the fairy tale image of children talking with animals to a hesitant zenith in a daring and difficult interpretation of a poem of Mörike. This shows the block in the way of the reconciliation by finding its image only in its violent denial. The mimetic impulse is *precisely* an impulse without a proper object, because of the split from nature. The poem 'Mousetrap Rhyme' seems on the surface to be a 'sadistic identification with what civilised custom has done to an animal disdained as a parasite,'³ because the last verse ends with the image of the humans and their cat pouncing on the trapped mouse:

¹Cornel, *The Philosophy of the Limit*, p.34.

²Alford, 'Nature and Narcissism', p.186.

³Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.123. The poem is on p.123-124.

And careful for your little tail!
After dinner we will sing
After dinner we will spring
And make a little dance:
Swish, Swish!
My old cat will probably be dancing with.

But this finale is described as a dance, and the enigmatic phrasing of the last line is open, suspended in a poetic gesture toward something else. The dance introduces an expressive moment, because it must be a sympathetically mimetic mimicry of the mouse's death-throws, the child's sorrow for what civilisation dictates for the mouse. So, for a moment, Adorno finds a positive behind the grim comedy of the dance of death: 'the involuntarily friendly image of child, cat and mouse dancing, the two animals on their hind legs.'¹ Real pet hugging, but with a biblical note! The poem, which looked like a simple mimicry of the civilised judgement on the mouse, turns critical by its honest depiction: 'The poem is the nonjudgmental reflex of language on a miserable, socially conditioned ritual, and as such it transcends it by subordinating itself to it.'² The artistic mimesis of the mouse's death produces an afterimage of freedom prompted by identification with its last movements. This afterimage is the illuminating side of mimesis, whereas the fascist persecution of social vermin produces no alternative to the ritualised slaughter it takes from the realm of the fairy tale and makes unreflectively real on an almost unimaginable scale. Building from the thoughts on Adorno's mimesis of death with which I ended my last chapter, I would suggest Adorno wants us to read his theory the way he reads the mousetrap rhyme: identifying

¹Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.124.

²Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p.124. This utopian interpretation of the mouse's death-throes has its model in Adorno and Horkheimer's much earlier interpretation in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* of a more terrible execution: The hanging of the women who had slept with the suitors in the climatic stages of the *Odyssey*. See *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.79-80. On my reading, their twitching feet are like the mouse's.

with the last movements of a theory almost frozen to death by modernity, in order to thaw out what life remains.

These quasi-mythic images remind us that as well as drawing on Freudian theory, the themes generated by Adorno's speculations on the interpenetration of modernity and barbarism use elements of Nietzsche's anthropological speculation, as developed in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics*. Nietzsche's writings on the terrible childhood of the human race explain why the utopian image of dancing with the animals only shadows the more ubiquitous sadism rampant in human relations. Nietzsche's unique approach to psychological analysis is therefore important in Adorno, as my hitherto sporadic introduction of Nietzschean themes may have indicated. These themes are the focus of my final chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

NIETZSCHEAN INFLUENCES ON ADORNO'S PHILOSOPHICAL APPROPRIATION OF PSYCHOANALYSIS.

Introduction.

Nietzsche often described himself as a psychologist, but his wide-ranging theories explode the boundaries of traditional conceptions of the discipline. He wants to be a 'new psychologist.'¹ Nietzsche's new psychology dismantles the defining object of psychological investigation: the human subject. This dismantlement, with its refusal to stop before any philosophical holy cows, was tremendously influential on Adorno's critical theory, especially his reception of Freud. 'Of all the critical theorists, Adorno was closest to Nietzsche.'² To bring this influence to the fore, in this chapter I re-examine various Freudian themes covered so far, from a Nietzschean perspective. As this is my final chapter, this partial revisiting will serve as a conclusion, aimed at reminding the reader that my own take on Adorno is, if left on its own, an untruth.

Nietzsche's perspectivism is one primary philosophical precursor of Adorno's use of theoretical constellations. By looking again at Adorno through Nietzsche's eyes I can counteract the reductive danger inherent in my Freudian fixation on the psychoanalytic star of Adorno's constellated influences. No single source provides the key to Adorno, as some famous remarks of Nietzsche's can remind us:

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil Good and Evil*, p.44.

²P. Pütz (1981), 'Nietzsche and Critical Theory', in *Telos*, no. 50 1981, New York: Telos Press, pp.103-114, p.104. General accounts of Nietzsche's influence on Adorno may be found throughout Rose's *The Melancholy Science* and Jay's *The Dialectical Imagination* and on p.208-210 of Held's *Introduction to Critical Theory*.

There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be.¹

Accordingly, although this chapter remains focused on psychology, I use Nietzsche to change the angles, and to connect with wider debates in critical theory, notably the challenge to Adorno's Freudo-Marxist philosophical paradigm initiated by Habermas's linguistic turn, and the related question of Adorno's alleged theoretical pessimism and gloomy disposition.

In Section I, 'Introducing Nietzsche,' I provide a general account of Nietzsche's philosophical project, aimed at introducing Adorno's lines of development out of it. Here, I almost entirely omit Adorno's critique of Nietzsche, which is covered in the next section.

In Section II, 'Habermas's Critique of Adorno's Nietzschean Anthropology,' I show how Adorno uses a critique of Nietzsche's dark account of the terrible childhood of human subjectivity and reason, to produce a critique of idealist and liberal illusions about historical development which tries to avoid Nietzsche's hidden absolutism. I explore Habermas's charge that Nietzsche's influence on Adorno's critical theory is nevertheless a pernicious one. Habermas's problem with Nietzsche is related to his problem with Freud's drive theory. Habermas understandably prefers sociological explanations of human impulse to those of psycho-biology. Habermas criticises Adorno's adoption of Nietzsche's allegedly totalising and pessimistic critique of reason, but the

¹F. Nietzsche (1989), *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale, New York: Vintage, p.119.

price of Habermas's abandoning of the dialectics of nature in favour of communications theory is the reduction of Freud and Nietzsche's materialistic insights to a sociologically hermeneutic discourse. This discourse nearly slips into idealism. Further, Habermas fails to register how much of his own critique of Nietzsche is prefigured in Adorno, who also criticises Nietzsche's enthusiastic biological essentialism.

In Section III, 'Nietzsche, Freud, and Adorno's Critique of the Super-Ego,' I examine the theoretical relationship between the often parallel conceptions of psychoanalysis and Nietzsche's psychological genealogy. Some of Adorno's apparently Freudian motifs turn out to have equally deep roots in Nietzsche. Nietzsche's criticism of the masochistic bad conscience which masquerades as a higher self is related to Adorno's critique of the Kantian moral imperative and his connected development of Ferenczi's sporadic intuition that the eradication of the super-ego might be the real goal of analytic therapy.

In Section IV, 'The Rancorous Authoritarian,' I show how Nietzsche became an outspoken critic of anti-Semitism, and how some of his insights influence Adorno and Horkheimer's 'Elements of Anti-Semitism.' Nietzsche's critique of the morality of *ressentiment* also plays a role in Adorno's sections of *The Authoritarian Personality*, where it remains hidden behind the more obvious psychoanalytic themes. These discussions provide a way of concluding this thesis by returning to the critique of authoritarian irrationalism with which I began my first chapter.

I: Introducing Nietzsche.¹

Always precocious and sickly, Nietzsche was educated at Pforta, a traditional Prussian college steeped in a tradition of militaristic classicism, expressed in an atmosphere of rigid discipline and high academic standards. Nietzsche's commitment to self-mastery and manly virtue develops in his writings from this point on, and this period also marks an intensification of his lifelong struggle with ill-health.² Nietzsche specialised in classical philology, whilst also planning to follow his father as a theologian. At university Nietzsche supplemented his courses in theology with the classics and a study of philosophical and art history. Of the philosophers, his study of Kant and Schopenhauer yielded the most results, an intellectual course similar to the one behind Adorno's "secular theology." Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy of the will and its overcoming through ascetic discipline was one of the first systematic results in German philosophy of the reception of Vedantic and Buddhist traditions of Eastern philosophy. Nietzsche was attracted to Schopenhauer's resolute negativity, his exposure of the sufferings of existence and the tissue of compensating delusions that the bodily will weaves for itself. The intellectually isolated Nietzsche warmed to Schopenhauer's pessimism about modern humanity. Schopenhauer later held a similar appeal for Adorno and, especially, Horkheimer. In Nietzsche's case, this Schopenhauerian contempt for his fellow men was accompanied by a *penchant* for past heroism. Ancient Greece seemed to

¹The biographical elements of this account are drawn from R. Hayman (1980), *Nietzsche: A Critical Life*, London: Weidenfeld Nicolsen. Hayman also provides a clear overview of Nietzsche's theory, which I have found useful and drawn upon in this introduction to his work. I have also drawn on the various introductions (by Michael Tanner, Walter Kaufmann and R.J. Hollingdale) to those of Nietzsche's texts listed in my bibliography.

²Hayman, *Nietzsche*, pp.24-29.

Nietzsche, as to his romantic forerunners, to mark the zenith of human evolution, with the rest of history being a history of decline. As can be imagined, Nietzsche therefore comprehensively rejected Hegel's confident view of history as an automatic progression towards some sort of final resolution of conflict. Nietzsche's critique of modernity is important as part of Adorno's critique of progress, and the whole neo-Romantic theme of a life that does not live.

Nietzsche glorified and eternalised conflict, suffering and inequality, seeing them as essential components of healthy growth, against the democrats and socialists who wanted to level everything to the lowest common denominator. Adorno's fear of the masses and his critique of identity thinking builds on Nietzsche's horror of herd politics. Nietzsche's critique of cultural decline and decadence, omnipresent in Adorno's critique of culture industry, at first rendered Nietzsche sympathetic to right-wing movements calling for a German national and cultural renewal, aimed at rekindling the healthy Greek lust for life in all its terrible glory. For Nietzsche, the best artistic instantiation of the affirmative trait so lacking in decadent modern societies was tragedy. His first book, *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*, originally published in 1872, consisted of an analysis of the rise and decline of the tragic form, together with a naive polemic praising the greatness of contemporary German music which might reverse that decline. This was a thinly veiled hagiography of Wagner, to whom Nietzsche had become close, portraying him as the rescuing hero of world culture.

Despite its reputation as an immature work, many of the essential features of Nietzsche's philosophy can be found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. Habermas draws on it to explain Nietzsche's project as a response to modernity which sought an alternative to the dominant philosophical positions of the German academy, much like Adorno's negative dialectic.

Nietzsche tried 'to explode the framework of occidental rationalism within which the competitors of Left and Right Hegelianism still moved.'¹ Both of these established philosophies produced systems 'in which reason was validated as an equivalent for the unifying power of religion.'² Nietzsche instead boldly rejects the possibility of recouping a purified reason from the clash of faith and enlightenment, providing a spur for Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Habermas suggests *The Birth of Tragedy* reworks neo-romantic aesthetic notions drawn from Hölderlin and Schlegel to fashion an anti-historicist vision of a festive art capable of decentring the human subject in a shattering linkage between our archaic origins and a utopian future. The centrepiece is a notion of an 'overwhelming feeling of unity leading back to the very heart of nature,'³ a feeling still important in Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* as a (thwarted) model for reconciliation with nature.

Nietzsche sees tragedy as a collective affirmation of the will to live even in the face of the horror of natural existence. This focus on affirmation remained as a definitive corner-stone of Nietzsche's philosophy, and marked the beginning of a departure from the orbit of Schopenhauer's philosophy. Nietzsche says that if we affirm life - and anything less is death - we cannot leave anything out and must affirm suffering and horror, too. Only the 'ploughshare of evil' can create true fertility, breaking through the sedimented crust of convention.⁴ Adorno and Horkheimer try to critically appropriate this realisation through their ongoing fascination with the whispering voice of the "black" writers of

¹Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, p.74.

²Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.84.

³Nietzsche (1967), *Birth of Tragedy*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, p.59, and see Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.88.

⁴Nietzsche, quoted and discussed in Hayman, *Nietzsche*, p.237. The point is perhaps that everything new is condemned as evil by convention, because the new wants to shatter tradition.

modernity. They try to steer a course between Schopenhauer's ascetic renunciation of desire and Nietzsche's endorsement of affirmation.

Also evident in *The Birth of Tragedy* is a prototypical version of Nietzsche's theory of biological drives, which influenced Freud and Adorno. These drives work themselves out through human individuals, as well as through ethical and moral systems. These things (subjective individuality, ethics, morals) are the arena of illusions and self-deceiving unities which claim autonomy from nature, a notion central in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. On re-reading the book in 1886 in order to write a new preface, Nietzsche decided that the connection of ethics with a theory of drives was the main concern of the work: 'What, seen in the perspective of life, is the significance of morality?'¹

This question is more fully developed in *Beyond Good and Evil* and *On the Genealogy of Morals*. As it stands in *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche's drive theory owes as much to theology as biology. Existence is conceived as the endless play of forms, characterised by a kind of cosmic artistry. The Greek model takes these forces as struggling gods, making sport out of the fecund energies of the universe. Nietzsche follows the Greek belief that the only way to celebrate these profound transfers of energy is aesthetic. Existence should be apprehended as a work of art.

Nietzsche at first sees Greek history and tragic art as the product of a fertile exchange between the gods Apollo and Dionysus. In the Apollonian sun-cult the golden god symbolises the principle of individuation. Following this interpretation, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* shows the triumph of the principle of individuation over the chthonic powers represented by the weaker gods of those colonised by the Greeks, and by the inner pull of the primitive drives sacred to those lower deities. The Apollonian unity is most clearly encapsulated by the dream, vital to Greek

¹Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p.22.

oracular procedure. The sharp clarity of the revelatory dream unifies even the most paradoxical and warring elements. However, putting a twist on this metaphor of illumination already familiar from my discussion of Adorno's dialectical optics, Nietzsche suggests that the bright star of Apollonian individuality is in fact a kind of inverse sun-spot, caused by staring into the pitch-black abyss of the primal void. From this void stares the grinning mask of Dionysus, the god of intoxication and disintegration, whose twice-born and fragmented body dances feverishly behind the calm surface of Greek society, disturbing the Apollonian order.

Nietzsche alludes to obscure orgiastic and ritual practices. He provides little in the way of detail, but presumably has in mind the phallic cults and shadowy stories of rampaging female initiates of Dionysus terrifying the population. Such things also influenced Walter Benjamin's profane illuminations. Nietzsche sees these mass practices as the core of Attic tragedy, which he controversially builds up from the Dionysian chorus and its wild music. Traditional classicism regards the chorus as an epiphenomenon compared to the formal dialogue which, operating according to the Apollonian principle of dream-like illusion, eventually becomes the normative standard for Western narrative style, as first becomes clear in Homer's epic unification of the fragmented pre-Hellenic myths.

Instead of founding tragedy in the unified dramatic narrative, Nietzsche maintains that its origin is the Dionysian rite itself, in which the intoxicated initiates actually experience the presence of their god within themselves as the inspiration of their wild actions. The best of tragedy recalls something of this:

the struggle, the pain, the destruction of phenomena, now appear necessary to us, in view of the excess of countless forms of existence which force and push one another into life, in view of the exuberant fertility of the universal will.

We are pierced by the maddening sting of these pains just when we have become, as it were, one with the infinite primordial joy in existence, and when we anticipate, in Dionysian ecstasy, the indestructibility and eternity of this joy. In spite of fear and pity, we are the happy living beings, not as individuals, but as the *one* living being, with whose creative joy we are united.¹

The masked actor as a publicly assimilable, controlled and temporary avatar of the god is a later substitute for the excesses of personal initiation in the frenzied dance in which the sacred music breaks the bonds of subjectivity.

But in *The Birth of Tragedy* Attic tragedy is not conceived as a simple repetition of Dionysus's intoxicated destruction of the Apollonian individual - it is only through Apollo's dream-like clarity that tragedy can take the stage as the sublime diversion of a strong culture reconciled with the terrifying forces of nature. In his looking to music to provide something other than mediocre experience, Nietzsche is influenced by Wagner's conception of the 'total work of art,' the form that was to transcend opera and drama by reconnecting these split traditions to their mythic roots. But Nietzsche in the end rejected the claim to totality of Wagner's mythology, seeing it as regressive, saying of *Parsifal* 'never before has there been such a *deadly hatred* of the search for knowledge! - One has to be a cynic in order not to be seduced here; one has to be able to bite in order not to worship here.'² Adorno's musicology follows this cynical impulse: 'all music can very easily sound as *Parsifal* did to Nietzsche's ear. It recalls incomprehensible rites and surviving masks of an earlier time, and is provocative nonsense.'³

¹Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p.104-105.

²F. Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, p.184.

³Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', p.298.

But Adorno does on occasion negatively hint at the Dionysian potential of art, keen to distance it from the modern parody of the ecstatic rite, the rock and roll concert; 'the current musical consciousness of the masses can scarcely be called Dionysian.'¹ His harsh comments about 'jitterbugs' could easily be transposed into an observation of an E-entranced raver, who mimics sexual freedom, parodying it instead:

Their ecstasy is without content. That it happens, that the music is listened to, this replaces the content itself. The ecstasy takes possession of its object by its own compulsive character. It is stylized like the ecstasies savages go into beating the war drums. It has convulsive aspects reminiscent of St. Vitus' dance or the reflexes of mutilated animals.²

However, Nietzsche's focus on the wild music of the chorus is part of his insistence that the tragic myth 'does not at all obtain adequate objectification in the spoken word,'³ and this does influence Adorno, surfacing in the gap between concept and object erected in *Negative Dialectics*. Nietzsche's wariness about the claims of mere words to directly represent reality finds its ultimate expression in the playful linguistic masks and musical metaphors he uses in his mature works to insinuate this linguistic instability into the experience of his readers. Style can be as important as argument in Nietzsche's work, as the vehicle of something which eludes the grasp of the concept, and Adorno develops this with a rigour lacking in Nietzsche.⁴ Nietzsche's celebration of playful masks marks a shift in his attitudes towards the exchanges between Apollo

¹Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', p.270.

²Adorno, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', p.292.

³Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, p.105. Also see Hayman, *Nietzsche*, p.163.

⁴See Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, pp.210-212. Held shows how Adorno used a constellational style to get closer to his objects.

and Dionysus. He came to regard the Apollonian principle of identity as a repression of Dionysian energies. This may be connected with his rejection of Wagner's heroic posing. Habermas sums up Nietzsche's overall position as a desire to reconnect with the Dionysian energies in order to confront 'subject-centred reason' with 'reason's absolute other.'¹ Although Habermas's picture is not altogether inaccurate, I will in my next section consider its reliance on an exaggeration of Nietzsche's position. For now, I continue with this more general exposition.

Nietzsche's wariness towards concepts in *The Birth of Tragedy* is clear in his mourning for the tragic philosophical play murdered at the hands of dry Socratic rationalism.² This critique of Socrates is the first of Nietzsche's demolition jobs on the heroes of the philosophical tradition, and marks the start of a critical analysis of the dialectic of enlightenment so crucial in Adorno:

For Nietzsche, Plato's teacher already represents all of the important attributes and virtues of the enlightenment: morality, dialectics, satisfaction and serenity. The self-restriction to what could be proven generates the illusion of the total malleability of the world and therefore man's power over others and over nature.³

As his body of work developed, Nietzsche's torrent of cultural criticism expanded to take on a vast selection of respected cultural and historical figures, whilst promoting marginalised and unpalatable alternative anti-heroes in excursions of unique venom and insight (culminating in his promotion of himself as the Anti-Christ). Nietzsche's critical perspective was still somewhat inhibited when *The Birth of Tragedy* was written in 1870-1. As he matured, Nietzsche more fully threw

¹Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.94.

²See Hayman, *Nietzsche*, p.120. Hayman show the roots of this idea in an earlier lecture on 'Socrates and Tragedy.'

³Pütz, 'Nietzsche and Critical Theory', p.108.

off the chains of Schopenhauer's pessimism, along with the baggage of the German romantic and idealistic traditions. He also renounced the anti-Semitic and proto-fascist tendencies of the Wagner camp, which are clear enough in the closing sections of Nietzsche's first book.¹ These sections eliminate the provocative tension between nihilism and affirmation which strains in the early part of the book, and Nietzsche soon abandoned this reconciliation as an illusion: his philosophical bomb kept ticking and German nationalism could not defuse his critique of modernity.

Nietzsche gave up the hope that any nation or race can claim to represent a pure hope for the future, and his work of the 1880s is full of caustic remarks about anti-Semitic German nationalists. These are an important source for the Frankfurt School critique of anti-Semitism (see Section IV, 'The Rancorous Authoritarian'). By 1882, Wagner could not stand to have Nietzsche's name mentioned in his presence.² All this goes to show that the Nazi appropriation of Nietzsche, whilst undoubtedly building on some features of his work, identified by Adorno, was also very selective. It is certainly anachronistic to regard Nietzsche as a Nazi philosopher, and this label is a distorting influence on Nietzsche's reception.³ Adorno and Horkheimer were among the few theorists of the immediate post-war period prepared to attempt the task of disentangling Nietzsche from his reception as a Nazi cultural hero.

Expressed in the terms of his mature writings, Nietzsche's conclusion is that if all life, values, and modes of existing are the result of

¹ Hayman links the rejection of Wagner with the break with Christianity and Schopenhauer, *Nietzsche*, pp.190-193, and later notes Nietzsche's more far-reaching rejection of idealism, especially Kantian moralism. *Nietzsche*, pp.215-216. The break with the Wagner camp was mutual. They thought Nietzsche had been infected with Jewish thoughts by Paul Rée. See Hayman, p.204.

² Hayman, *Nietzsche*, p.281.

³ On the question of fascism, see Hayman's brief comments in *Nietzsche*, p.359. Hayman says Nietzsche was anti-democratic, but that he would have hated Hitler's Germany.

interacting cosmic energies, then all specific ethical and moral systems must in the end realise that they are masks covering the shocking face of reality: all life is a will to power, in the face of which all values must be revalued. This "big picture of the big picture" gives Adorno the courage to retain a far-reaching messianic moment in his theory.

Nietzsche's revaluation shows up human reason as a mode of cunning developed to serve the self-preservation drive. Reason is so cunning that it even engages in pretty self-deceptions as to its true nature. The historical accumulation of such errors eventually gives rise to decadent forms of reason and morality which deny their basis in forms of power and thus become masochistically weakened, tyrannising over themselves as well as others. In *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche claims that 'under the flattering colours and varnish' of our highest moral categories 'the terrible basic text *homo natura* must again be discerned.'¹ This is 'morality understood as the theory of the relations of dominance under which the phenomenon "life" arises.'² The critique of reason in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* owes a great deal to this far-reaching philosophical upsetting of tradition.

Nietzsche seeks a way of critically distinguishing those modes of life which enhance the vigour of the cosmic driving forces from those which restrain and weaken them. This is ultimately a matter of perspective, of taste. Furthermore, the most refined aesthetic dishes often require apparently repellent ingredients. Nietzsche suggests that the archaic experiences of a person's sex, race or class determine their whole mode of experiencing and moral perspective. Those accustomed to a plenitude of power - the masters - radiate a serene self-confidence, a terrible directness and a noble generosity. For their peers, they show a combative respect, a

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.162.

²Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.49.

willingness to become either honourable enemies or blood-bound comrades. Masters show an active lust for life, and express an aesthetic sensibility which realises that pain, pleasure, despair and ecstasy are all colours to be used to convert one's life into a work of art, gladly bisected by the decentring forces which transcend the mere individual. Nietzsche's historical examples of such master races and classes include the Japanese nobility and the Aryan invaders of India, as well as those glorious Greeks. These social groups define good and bad according to their own standards: what is good resembles them, what is bad is like those they conquer: weak, scheming and seemingly petty.

Nietzsche suggests that the perspective of the dominated slaves is characterised by distrust, paranoia, *ressentiment*, rancour and envy. Cunning and cleverness are virtues of the slaves who must try to outwit their masters to survive. The extravagant actions of the masters seem evil, cruel and capricious to the slaves. Slaves define good as that which is like them: weak and powerless. This may develop to the point of masochism, self-negation and guilty tyranny over the will to life itself.

The Jewish concept of sin reflects one such morality but Christianity, with its doctrine of turning the other cheek and abasing the self before the Almighty, is identified as the slave morality *par excellence*. Stoicism, Buddhism, democracy and socialism are also given as prominent historical examples of *ressentiment* as ethics. Despite the difficulties of adopting Nietzsche's dichotomy of master and slave, Adorno takes the concept of *ressentiment* and uses it as part of his critique of anti-Semitism.

Nietzsche sees the concept of equality as a dangerous leveller, a reducer of the contrasts required for fertile exchanges between warring drives and forces, and this notion of free exchange between different particulars plays a part in Adorno's conceptual utopia. Furthermore, the

passive herd instinct which is the source of the idea of equality turns out to be the wellspring of horrific cruelty, channelling rancour into the rejection of those who are different. If this rancour is not controlled a society of petty spite and vengeance becomes the norm. The psychology of the authoritarian is 'almost a microcosmic image of the totalitarian state at which he aims. Nothing can be left untouched, as it were; everything must be made "equal" to the ego-ideal of a rigidly conceived and hypostatized ingroup.'¹

Despite the problems with it, Nietzsche has in fact got well beyond simple duality with the dichotomy of master and slave moralities, which is why Adorno wants to engage with these ideas. The nuances of Nietzsche's analysis make it clear that these pure types always appear in various complex mixtures, and furthermore that both have their strengths and weaknesses, their perspectival truths. As with the Apollonian and Dionysian principles, it is the interactions and exchanges which are important.

For Nietzsche, the final perspective is always on a scale that decentres the human subject completely. In the face of infinity, life is characterised by fate and repetition. If infinite forces interact infinitely, all things must have happened many times, and will happen again. We cannot escape this via negation, so we must positively affirm our actions and life itself, willing all that we do to happen again in exactly the same way as before. With this doctrine of the eternal return, a glad reversal of Schopenhauer's Buddhist wish to step off the endless wheel of desire, Nietzsche returns to the positive valuation he bestowed on myth in the *Birth of Tragedy*.

In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche provides a mytho-poetic account of his philosophy. To give a flavour of this work, I will present

¹Adorno, *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.324.

the first of Zarathustra's discourses, which has a special relevance for this thesis. This is because it sets out a dialectic transposing the notions of spiritual infancy and maturity. Zarathustra discusses the 'three metamorphoses of the spirit: how the spirit shall become a camel, and the camel a lion, and the lion at last a child.'¹ Spirit-as-camel has the strength to carry difficult weights, gladly suffering the demands placed on the seeker. But the camel with its heavy load wanders into a desert, whose open vistas kindle a desire for freedom. The spirit becomes a lion, seeking to be 'lord of its own desert.' It rejects God's 'thou shalt,' roaring out a defiant 'I will.' This is the sacred 'No,' the refusal of duty and of the inherited values of tradition. The beast of prey seizes the right to create new values, but cannot itself create them. For this, the spirit must become a child: 'The child is innocence and forgetfulness, a new beginning, a sport, a self-propelling wheel, a first motion, a sacred Yes. Yes, a sacred Yes is needed my brothers, for the sport of creation.'

In this mythic format, in part a parody of biblical parable, Nietzsche provides a meditation on the qualities needed for the education of the critical spirit: self-discipline, independence and open creativity. Those who master these modes of self-relation and self-overcoming may exceed that which they were, becoming stepping-stones for the shadowy possibility of a new way of being. The superman, a new type of subject, could forge a different horizon from the ashes left over from the cremation of God and metaphysics. The affirmation of the eternal return is the key to the superman's post-human gaze, and although Adorno provides a critique of the superman's love of fate, Adorno's quasi-messianic hope for a refigured subjectivity transcending the self-preservation drive and its separation from nature is hardly conceivable without Nietzsche. Vincent

¹All quotes from F. Nietzsche (1969), *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, p.54-56.

P. Pecora expresses the situation with elegance when he compares Nietzsche's attitude to Wagner and modernity with critical theory's to Nietzsche. We may have seen through his excesses and faults (Pecora reclaims the right to hate Nietzsche), but things still never sound the same once we have heard Nietzsche's dissonances: 'the question is not what position one takes on *der Fall Nietzsche* [the case of Nietzsche] or how one formulates one's pro or con, but rather: Can we endure any other music?'¹

Having provided this brief sketch of Nietzsche's philosophy, I examine Adorno and Habermas's contrasting attitudes towards him, and the way these contrasts lead into certain debates about Freud.

¹Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.106.

II: Habermas's Critique of Adorno's Nietzschean Anthropology.

In Habermas's grand detective narrative *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, the villain is Nietzsche. Peter Hohendahl analyses Habermas's critique of Nietzsche's 'dangerous influence.'¹ Habermas's central theme is that Nietzsche's allegedly pernicious influence renders most of Habermas's philosophical mentors and rivals (often, one becomes the other...) either irrational or ineffective. Only communicative rationality can save us now.

When treating the relationship between Adorno and Nietzsche, Habermas is guilty of various over-simplifications, driven by his need to cast Nietzsche in the all too familiar role of the arch-irrationalist. These simplifications make it easier for Habermas to criticise Adorno's appropriation of Nietzschean motifs. Firstly, Habermas concurs too readily with accounts of Nietzsche which over-emphasise the Dionysian element. In this, he plays into the hands of post-structuralism.² Although it is true that Nietzsche himself encourages a focus on Dionysus, demoting the Apollo of *The Birth of Tragedy* along with Wagner, those who follow his injunctions to read carefully will find plenty of evidence of the persistence of a restrained commitment to individuation in Nietzsche's later works. In other words, it is obtuse to present Nietzsche simply as an opponent of individuation. While he certainly wished to open the subject to otherness, at the same time the personal will to power of the superman, who was to achieve this through the exertion of a joyful self-overcoming, demanded a

¹P.U. Hohendahl (1985), 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited: Habermas' Critique of the Frankfurt School', *New German Critique*, no. 35 Spring-Summer 1985, New York: Telos Press, pp.3-26, p.14. Hohendahl provides details of the Lukácsian dimension of Habermas's critique. Habermas thinks Adorno falls into the abyss, too.

²P.U. Hohendahl (1992), 'Adorno Criticism Today', in *New German Critique*, no. 56 Spring-Summer 1992, New York: Telos Press, pp.3-16, p.7.

'wholeness in diversity'¹ neglected by Habermas as well as by irrationalist readings of Nietzsche. This motif of a diverse wholeness plays an important part in Adorno's hints at a utopian relationship with otherness. I would argue this notion of wholeness shows that the superman cannot do without an Apollonian moment, even if this is conceived as a sublimation of a primary Dionysian one. I discuss Adorno's dialectical views on the notion of the superman in Section III. In general, Habermas's reading of Nietzsche tends to focus on the wild and transgressive elements, whilst neglecting the cultured restraint which acts as a balancing force. For example, Nietzsche's parable on the three metamorphoses of the spirit must be read through the notion of the eternal return to realise that it is not a hierarchy. The scholarly virtues of the camel are invaluable for locating the desert of unexplored territory where new values might be created, and the spirit cannot become truly childlike without finding its own strength, plodding through the desert in search of an inner lion. Kaufmann has suggested that popularised readings of Nietzsche which choose to focus only on the notorious blond beast are exhibiting their own hidden desires through a selective and moralising interpretation. Pecora makes a similar point, noting that whilst Habermas is happy to point out Nietzsche's denunciations of truth, science and ascetic morality,

Habermas more or less ignores the simultaneous self-parody of this denunciation in Nietzsche's work - the way, for example, the *On the Genealogy of Morals* ends not at all with the simple denial of the belief in truth or the ascetic ideal but with the ironic recognition of their historical value, indeed of Nietzsche's own necessary complicity with them.²

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.143.

²Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.119.

Nevertheless, Habermas correctly states that for Nietzsche 'subject-centred reason is conceived as the result and expression of a perversion of the will to power.'¹ Nietzsche undermines attempts to pit reason against power by insisting that reason is simply a certain form of power. This form of power masochistically deludes itself into imagining that it instantiates a purified moral realm. Habermas sees this reduction of reason to power as a totalising move which leaves only taste as a mode of discrimination capable of selecting between authentic and inauthentic expressions of power. Habermas rejects the various categories provided by Nietzsche to aid the task of educating the palate (active/reactive, noble/slave, manly/effeminate), claiming they rely on a merely aesthetic logic. This logic, by going outside reason to criticise it, gets 'caught up in the dilemma of a self-enclosed critique of reason that has become total.'² The emancipatory potential of reason is discarded and replaced with an eternal critique of metaphysics modelled on the play of the philosopher-god, Dionysus.

Against the background of this critique of Nietzsche's unmasking of reason, Habermas is able to portray Adorno's attempt to rescue elements of Nietzsche as a half-way house on the wrong track towards a total abandonment of the emancipatory interest. Adorno's perverse dwelling is seen as the self-consciously obdurate construction of an inescapable 'performative contradiction'³ which suppresses reason's communicative basis in consensus, in order to maintain the messianic horizon of a critique of reason that pulls the rug out from under itself.

One problem with Habermas's tactic is that it takes for granted the division of reason and power which it ought to be demonstrating. Adorno's appropriation of Nietzsche instead takes advantage of the

¹Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.95.

²Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.97

³Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.127

internal link between reason and its self-proclaimed other, using it as the pivot around which immanent critique can turn. In this, Adorno is reading Nietzsche in the same way as the other dark writers of modernity interpreted in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (see my Chapter Two, Section I: 'Literary Psychoanalysis: Dark Literature as a Case Study on the Spiritual Situation of the Age'). Adorno always carries out ideology critique according to Nietzsche's maxim from *Beyond Good and Evil*: 'You may lie with your mouth, but with the mouth you make as you do so you nonetheless tell the truth.'¹ The point of Adorno's thorough-going ideology critique is the realisation that since 'the whole is the false,'² ideology, as a crystallisation of that whole, can offer a negative imprint of the truth. For Adorno, this is as near to the True as we can get. Nietzsche insists that the spring of knowledge offered by philosophical systems is salty and polluted,³ but Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* suggests that when dying of a philosophical thirst, the thinker must learn to stay alive by drinking dirty water. In this, Adorno escapes Nietzsche's over-fastidious concern with intellectual cleanliness, in a criticism compatible with Habermas's uneasiness about the notion of authentic taste. Adorno noted that Nietzsche, 'whose reflection penetrated even the concept of truth, drew back dogmatically before that of genuineness.'⁴ I think this is even true of Nietzsche's attempt to escape the aporia via the notion of an authenticity secured through a series of masks.

Despite this commonality between Adorno and Habermas's critique of Nietzsche, the divergences are more persistent. Habermas sees Adorno's central theme - a dialectic of enlightenment which engages seriously with Nietzsche's primal history of subjectivity - as a conceptual

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.105.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.50.

³F. Nietzsche (1977), *A Nietzsche Reader*, trans. and ed. R.J. Hollingdale, London; Penguin, p.32-32.

⁴Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.154

trap, the philosophical equivalent of painting oneself into a corner. According to Habermas, Adorno replicates Nietzsche's allegedly totalising assault on reason. This is both an exaggeration of Nietzsche, and a neglect of Adorno's own critique of Nietzsche. This provides a more sophisticated version of Habermas's own critique, but with the advantage of not throwing the Nietzschean baby out with the bathwater.

Perhaps the real reason behind Habermas's need to drain away the labours of Nietzsche and Adorno is the validation his own grand system, which is supposed to begin by going back to the theoretical interest in ethical community abandoned by the young Hegel, a point whose development could lead to a theory of intersubjective reason. In order to argue that the only way is back, Habermas has to make the exaggerated claim that Adorno's philosophy offers no way forward.

Not least among the reasons for taking issue with this perspective is that Habermas's discourse does not proceed according to its own normative standards. In driving his thesis through, Habermas uses a lot more than the unforced force of the better argument. He has to alternately exaggerate and suppress that from which he wishes to differentiate himself. This is not necessarily a problem: both Adorno and Nietzsche embrace the impossibility of a pure discourse and happily (but always reflectively) deploy exaggeration and distortion. But ironically, Habermas's exaggerations and suppressions masquerade as a transcendence of precisely these rhetorical strategies! The ambitious philosophy of intersubjectivity fails to either escape the dialectic of enlightenment altogether (the aim Habermas ironically shares with Nietzsche), or to employ its inertia effectively and reflectively (the aim of Adorno's conceptual Judo).

Habermas claims 'the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not do justice to the rational content of cultural modernity that was captured in

bourgeois ideals (and also instrumentalised along with them),¹ suggesting that Adorno completely abandoned Marx's immanent approach to the evaluation of bourgeois conceptual and economic claims.

Yet Adorno maintains in *Negative Dialectics* that ideology critique is still central to philosophy, but now as 'a critique of the constitutive consciousness itself.'² I have already compared this project with the aims of psychoanalysis (Chapter One, Section VI: 'Psychoanalysis as Negative Knowledge'). It should now be clear that Nietzsche's critique of the subject is also crucial in this connection. However, Habermas's mistaken claim does at least implicitly register the incompatibility of any strict Nietzscheanism with immanent critique, which always insists on some concept of the True (even if it is Adorno's negative one). This points the way towards the element of Adorno's theory which refutes the charge of its being a totalising critique of reason.

Adorno warns against the tendency of interpreters of Nietzsche to seize on moments of irrationality, pleasure or excess dedicated to escaping rationality in an immediate negation of it. In the face of such popularised conceptions, Adorno sticks to dialectics: 'Like the concept itself, however, irrationality itself remains a function of the *ratio* and an object of its self-criticism: what slips through the net is filtered by the net.'³

Only by sticking to immanent critique as far as is possible can one critically grasp the negative space of what is not allowed to be. The gap between concept and object (prefigured in Nietzsche's suspicion of the claims of conceptual reason) is the pivot for a conceptual critique of conceptuality. The gap negatively maps the utopian idea of a fully rational identity. Ideas such as this

¹Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.113.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.148.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.85.

are neither *Choris* [distinct] nor an empty sound; they are negative signs. The untruth of any identity that has been attained is the obverse of truth. The ideas live in the cavities between what things claim to be and what they are. Utopia would be above identity and above contradiction; it would be a togetherness of diversity.¹

Positive formulations always collapse back into the rationality they claim to escape. So, despite the Nietzschean 'togetherness of diversity' in this passage of Adorno's, Adorno attacks Nietzsche's attempt to produce a positive conception of nobility. This, with all its exhortations to manliness, eventually sounded as shrill and resentful as the slave morality. Nietzsche was not a fascist, but when his conception of the strong and noble soul was raised to a world-historical principle by the Nazis it revealed its horrible truth, which shows up its falsity.² For example, one of Nietzsche's historical anti-heroes was Cesare Borgia.³ Adorno suggests that 'if Cesare Borgia were resurrected today, [...] his name would be Adolf Hitler.'⁴ In addition, Adorno suggests that the superman, in aiming at 'complete independence from external powers'⁵ was too autarkic a conception, slipping back into a Kantian notion of autonomy as unconditioned maturity.

Nietzsche's great strength, alongside the other dark writers, was that he 'mercilessly declared the shocking truth' that 'the essential nature of prehistory is the appearance of extreme cruelty in detail.'⁶ However, when Nietzsche wants to affirm this, along with everything else, Adorno parts

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.150.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.101.

³Nietzsche, *A Nietzsche Reader*, p. 122, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.118, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.261.

⁴Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.97.

⁵Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.114-115.

⁶Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.118.

company with his complacent levelling of hope. Nietzsche takes inequality, rank and hierarchy as permanent (if shifting) biological facts

On no point, however, is the common European consciousness more reluctant to learn than it is here; everywhere one enthuses, even under scientific disguises, about coming states of society in which 'there will be no more exploitation' - that sounds to my ears like promising a life in which there will be no organic functions. 'Exploitation' does not pertain to a corrupt or imperfect or primitive society: it pertains to the *essence* of the living thing as a fundamental organic function, it is a consequence of the intrinsic will to power which is precisely the will of life. - Granted this is a novelty as a theory - as a reality it is the *primordial fact* of all history: let us be at least that honest with ourselves!¹

This enshrines a false absolute, abandoning the moment of contingency that forms hope's last refuge: exploitation might be an incontrovertible feature of all history, but only *so far* - things could perhaps be different. Instead of affirming what is, Adorno sought to preserve the sense of reaching towards the different as a rational kernel of religious and metaphysical thought, even though this meant damning what is (see Chapter Two, Section VII). This is why *Minima Moralia* opens with the phrase 'the melancholy science' - an inversion of Nietzsche's affirmative *Gay Science*.² Adorno saw this critical inversion of Nietzsche's Yes-saying as working in service of its aim. Adorno wants a world worthy of affirmation, and isn't going to settle for affirmation-under-duress. Adorno 'is in earnest when he argues that his melancholy science should be placed in the region of philosophy devoted to the teaching of the good life.'³

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.194.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.15. Rose explains this reversal in *The Melancholy Science*, p.17.

³Cornel, *Philosophy of the Limit*, p.17. Presumably, Cornel here alludes to Aristotle's *Magna Moralia*. See Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p.17.

It is even possible that Nietzsche's affirmation is an unconscious residue of the Christian morality he despised so much. The insistence on loving fate is rather like Christ's injunction to love everybody. Against the latter, Adorno refers to Freud's *Civilisation and its Discontents*, where Freud 'rejected the commandment that one should without distinction love all mankind. Such indiscriminate love goes along with contempt for mankind.'¹ Transposing this to Nietzsche's love of fate suggests Nietzsche betrays the better possibilities of life by celebrating even its worst side. If an indiscriminating love of life hides a contempt for it, this perhaps accounts for Nietzsche's tone of masochistic relish, his glorification of suffering:

the origin of *amor fati* might be sought in a prison. Love of stone walls and barred windows is the last resort who sees and has nothing else to love [...] resignation bows down in the *amor fati* [...] before the powers that be. In the end hope, rested from reality by negating it, is the only form in which truth appears.²

Adorno's critique of Hegel, and by extension Marx, nevertheless deploys a Nietzschean dialectic of domination. 'No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.'³ So, unlike Marx's, Adorno's Left-Hegelianism makes no claim to have discovered the historical instantiation of the determining negation of the negation. Whilst it continues to exist, the negative remains a negative. Adorno does deploy a quasi-Marxian critique of Nietzsche; a hope that historical antagonism might truly be 'Antagonism Contingent.'⁴ The commitment to a moment of contingent historical openness means, however, that the necessity in

¹Adorno, *Sociology and Psychology, Part Two*, p.97.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.98.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.320.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.321.

Marx which guarantees reconciliation must be abandoned in the same way as Nietzsche's love of fate.

As I have suggested, this historical openness cannot, contra Habermas, condemn every potential of reason. Adorno seeks to outline a concept of rational identity by drawing on the subject's primordial mimetic capacity to provide a will to identification that does not seek to exploit its object. At its best, 'instead of simply identifying the nonidentical, culture identifies itself *with* the nonidentical.'¹ Adorno does not thereby lose sight of the illuminating aspect of Nietzsche's grasp of the depth of the will to exploitation. Nietzsche charted the influence of primal fear, rage and hunger on our archaic inheritance and Adorno regarded the putting of 'such mysteries into words' as 'Nietzsche's liberating act, a true turning point of Western civilisation.'² The dichotomous view of the world as aggressor or prey conditioned perception from the start, perhaps marking the first differentiation of master and slave perspectives.

Adorno uses Nietzsche's dubiously speculative animal formulations to produce a unique critique of idealism. Adorno likens idealistic philosophical systems to all-consuming beasts of prey. He suggests that pouncing on prey 'is difficult and often dangerous,' and that hunger must become rage in order 'for the beast to dare it.'³ Adorno suggests this is a primal form of distortion: 'If the lion had a consciousness, his rage at the antelope he wants to eat would be ideology.'⁴ For human beings, especially masters, this projective tendency 'gives unconscious sway to the ideology that the not-I, the Other, and finally all that remains of nature is inferior, so that the unity of self-preserving

¹Zuidervaat, *Adorno's Aesthetic Theory*, p.168.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.23.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.22.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.349.

thought may devour it without misgivings.¹ Adorno insists that no system can achieve a pure neutrality: 'any standpoint it were asked to have would be that of the diner regarding the roast.'² Nietzsche realised this, and enjoyed his dinner, unlike idealism, which carries this archaic inheritance unreflectively. It imagines itself above nature, but is really caught up in natural relations: 'The system is the belly turned mind, and rage is the mark of each and every idealism.'³

But Adorno has altered Nietzsche's terms of reference. Nietzsche was more inclined to revile idealism as a slave morality, a philosophical sheep, than as a beast of prey, so Adorno is reversing Nietzsche. Nietzsche thought the beast of prey was free of the resentfully projective paranoia of those who are preyed upon. Adorno's formulation undermines the idea that the lion sees things more clearly from its mountain heights. This does not leave Nietzsche untouched: 'Ideology lies in wait for the mind which delights in itself like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, for the mind which all but irresistibly becomes an absolute to itself.'⁴ So, contra Nietzsche, a lofty perspective is also the organon of ideology, and the glorification of brute nature is one link in a long chain of cultural yearnings for a natural absolute:

The idolising of the vital phenomena from the 'blond beast' to the South Sea islanders inevitably leads to the 'sarong film' and the advertising posters for vitamin pills and skin creams which simply stand for the immanent aim of publicity: the new, great, beautiful and noble type of man - the Führer and his storm troopers.⁵

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.22-3.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.30.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.23.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.30.

⁵Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.233-234.

This identifies any vitalistic philosophy as a kind of 'biological idealism':¹ erecting a biological Other to the subjective idea inflates that biology to an absolute as useless as the absolute concept. This completes Adorno's dialectical appropriation of the Ur-history of subjectivity, allowing the Nietzschean critique of idealism to attack its author from behind.

Having established the general outlines of Adorno's appropriations from Nietzsche, it is worth showing briefly how they are intimately intertwined with certain Marxist and Freudian concepts in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Adorno and Horkheimer make much of Nietzsche's motif of primal domination, in order to internally link reason and violence.

The principle of individuation has to exert a violent control over both inner and outer nature. The references in the *Dialectic* to the monotheistic rationalisation of the pantheon of unruly natural gods combines Nietzsche's drive theory with Freud's. One of the first stages in this rationalisation was the development of sacrificial rituals, controlled by a priestly caste, which covertly sought to control the gods whilst seeming to kneel before them. Nietzsche describes this enlightened moment of ritual, writing of

that secret defiance of the gods encountered among many peoples - one worships them, certainly, but one keeps in one's hand a final trump to be used against them; as when the Indians and Persians think of them as being dependent on the *sacrifice* of mortals, so that in the last resort mortals can let the gods go hungry or even starve them to death.²

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.97.

²F. Nietzsche (1982), *Daybreak, thoughts on the prejudices of morality*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p.80-81.

This human cunning is developed in ways which formalise the urge to control feared nature via a series of displacements of the sacrifice demanded by the gods of nature. Adorno and Horkheimer see these substitutions as the root of abstract manipulative logic, which loses more and more specificity as the process proceeds. The original demand is that the individual should sacrifice himself. The first displacement is onto those over whom the individual has power: his children, or an enemy. The next displacement is the substitution of an animal: 'the hind offered up for the daughter, and the lamb for the first-born.'¹ We can extrapolate onwards: in Christianity, we cunningly sacrifice the god, pretend that he wants to die, and even eat him in a complete reversal of the notion that we should feed the deity!

Adorno suggests that this chain of substitutions leads from the sacrifice of the self to nature, to the technological sacrifice of nature to the self:

In science there is no specific representation; and if there are no sacrificial animals, there is no god. Representation is exchanged for the fungible - universal interchangeability. An atom is smashed not in representation, but as a specimen of matter, and the rabbit does not represent but, as a mere example, is virtually ignored by the zeal of the laboratory.²

The Freudian twist is that the control of external nature begins with the natural forces within the self. Nietzsche called modern men 'the despisers of the body.'³ Like all displacements, the displacement of sacrifice eventually returns. The modern self is still alive, but is estranged from its inner nature, which it has sacrificed before the altar of the technical interest so that external nature may be forced to its knees, its own non-

¹Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.10.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.10.

³Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, p.61.

identical value reduced to nothing in the process of exchange. Science becomes the new high priest of ascetic discipline. 'Here critical theory need not illuminate Nietzsche, who himself radiates sufficient light.'¹ As Nietzsche put it; 'Our whole attitude towards nature, the way we violate her with the aid of machines and the heedless inventiveness of our technicians and engineers, is *hubris*.'²

In capitalist societies, this violation is mediated through the division of labour demanded by commerce in which the new priests of science kneel before Mammon. Class society fosters instrumentality as well as trying to remove the possibility of criticising it. This theme is of course familiar from Marx, but Nietzsche also provided a critique of the commercial perspective: 'The man engaged in commerce understands how to appraise everything without having made it [...] *in order to determine the value of a thing in his own eyes*.'³ In order to show how Nietzsche's influence is present in Adorno where some only see Marx, it is worth giving one of the sections from Nietzsche's *Daybreak* in full. In it can be discerned elements of Adorno's accounts of the decline of the individual, the death of thought, alienation, and the relation between wage labour, so-called leisure time and entertainment:

Worn out daily. - These young men lack neither character nor talent nor industry: but they have never been allowed time to choose a course for themselves; on the contrary, they have been accustomed from childhood onwards to being given a course by someone else. When they were mature enough to be 'sent off into the desert', something else was done - they were employed, they were purloined from themselves, they were trained to being *worn out daily* and taught to regard this as a matter of duty - and now they cannot do without it and would not have it otherwise. Only these poor beasts of burden must not be denied their 'holidays' - as they call this idleness-ideal of

¹Pütz, 'Nietzsche and Critical Theory', p.109.

²Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.113.

³Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, p.106.

an overworked century in which one is for once allowed to laze about, and be idiotic and childish to one's heart's content.¹

Adorno produces a similar observation, one which extends Nietzsche's insight into the holiday in a manner attuned to our own age of mass leisure:

Socially, the feeling of meaninglessness is a reaction to the wide-reaching freeing from work which takes place under conditions of continuing social unfreedom. The free time of the subjects withholds from them the freedom which they secretly hope for; their free time chains them to the ever-same, the apparatus of production - even when this apparatus is giving them a vacation.²

This kind of all-inclusive theory partially validates Habermas's scepticism towards totalising critiques, and yet Adorno's grasp of the economic incorporation of free time feels as relevant as ever. Adorno's understanding of the all-consuming economic apparatus shows how easily Nietzsche's exhortations to live dangerously can be depotentiated. The current fashion for sending executives 'off into the desert' to bang drums in orgies of creative bonding is no real solution to being worn out daily. When the weekend's white-water rafting is over, the heightened psychological togetherness and revitalised creativity is channelled rapidly into emotive advertising copy. Adorno's scepticism regarding Nietzsche's alternatives to the bourgeois disease he diagnoses so acutely allow us to understand paintball wargames as a popularised and defused remnant of Nietzsche's wishes for a more vital rite of passage. This exposes the weakness of Nietzsche's supposedly noble alternative to the commercial mentality, which is digested easily, emerging in the cut and thrust

¹Nietzsche, *Daybreak*, p.107.

²Adorno, *Jargon of Authenticity*, p.35-36.

management-speak of those in the boardrooms of the world who see themselves as the new blond beasts.¹

Adorno's rejection of Nietzsche's alternative to herd conformity brings us back to Habermas's charge that Adorno does no better. Against this charge, we should remember the admittedly fleeting references Adorno makes towards the idea of an enlightened enlightenment and the possibility of a form of rational exchange. Interestingly, Adorno chooses to adopt a strategy not unlike Habermas's own notion of going back to early Hegel to recoup a neglected potential of the Western *ratio*.

Adorno suggests that in certain early conceptions the *ratio* retained a notion of quality which could never be completely reduced to quantity, as has been the 'tendency of all science since Descartes.'² For example, despite Plato's introduction of mathematics into the method of philosophy, he did at least insist that thought should counter 'the violence of unleashed quantification' by adhering 'to the nature of things.'³ That Plato, the father of Western philosophy and the bugbear of irrationalists and vitalists, is credited with this sensitivity badly undermines Habermas's caricature of an anti-rational Adorno:

A parable from *Phaedrus* leaves no doubt of it [the qualitative moment of rationality]; there organising thought and nonviolence strike a balance. The principle, reversing the conceptual motion of synthesis, is that of 'division into species according to the natural formation, where the joints are, not breaking any part as a bad carver might.'⁴

¹Pecora makes some shrewd observations about Nietzsche's mass appeal and consumability, which are encouraged by Nietzsche's 'near pathetic bravura.' 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.129. See also p.104.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.43.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.43.

⁴Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.43.

Adorno does suggest that the possibility of retaining this sense of a rational conceptual exchange respecting the non-identity of nature and the other has almost been expunged, but still erects it as a utopian possibility meeting the demands of Nietzsche's critique of equality:

When we criticise the exchange principle as the identifying principle of thought, we want to realise the ideal of a free and just barter. To date, this ideal is only a pretext. Its realisation alone would transcend barter. Once critical theory has shown it up for what it is - an exchange of things that are equal and yet unequal - our critique of the inequality within equality aims at equality too, for all our scepticism of the rancour involved in the bourgeois egalitarian ideal that tolerates no qualitative difference. If no man had part of his labour withheld from him any more, rational identity would be a fact, and society would have transcended the identifying mode of thinking.¹

Adorno's inclusion of Nietzsche's critique of the resentful egalitarianism which reduces everything to a common level, levelled by Nietzsche at socialism as well as at bourgeois democracy, alongside a startlingly orthodox Marxist critique of capitalistic exchange, serves to bring us back to the original features of Adorno's attempt to rescue rationality from itself.

Habermas's critique of Adorno attacks his Marxist praxis philosophy as well as his Nietzschean elements, but that Habermas has to take on the former as well as the latter undermines his critique of both. If Adorno really did adopt Nietzsche's totalising critique of reason, he would have no room at all for Marxism. Likewise, if he really believed in the inevitability of revolutionary praxis, he would not need to criticise Nietzsche's love of fate.

While I agree that the dark tone of the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* is in part historically conditioned, Habermas absolutises it, and sees *Negative*

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.147.

Dialectics as a repetition of it. But the notion of rational identity - around which the latter text circles - is the development of the hint at an enlightened enlightenment that glimmers in the gloom of the former. Reading the earlier text through the later one allows us to see the tone of *Dialectic of Enlightenment* as the tone of a heartbroken lover of reason, whose painful denial of the possibility of love is actually a testimony to the depth of his hope that it might be otherwise: the heartbreak at what has become of reason is still a love of reason. The *Dialectic* is a tragic funeral oration for Western reason, not so much in opposition to it as in mourning for it. The hope in the chance of a resurrection - a reconnection of reason with the bodily good life (almost, an incarnation of reason) - may operate at a level hidden by the tone of despair, but it is there nonetheless.¹ In this respect, Habermas's positive view of the enlightenment may not be as different from the early Frankfurt School as he latterly maintains.

Whilst Habermas distances himself more and more explicitly from the philosophy of Adorno,² many of his critical insights - which I by no means wish to discard - still depend on crucial elements of Adorno's philosophy which are suppressed and elided in Habermas's account of the philosophical discourse of modernity. His own dualistic picture of modernity, as producing on the one hand a dynamic emancipatory rationalisation of the lifeworld, and on the other hand a dilemmatic payload of dysfunctions in the symbolic reproduction of that lifeworld,

¹This position on Adorno is the one developed by Hullot-Kentor, and is succinctly summed up in Hohendahl's useful survey of 'Adorno Criticism Today:' '*Dialectic of Enlightenment* does not, as Habermas charged in *The Theory of Communicative Action* and *Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, chart the end of reason, but unfolds its critique through the means of reason.' p.11.

²Hohendahl notes that Habermas's more recent writing on Adorno and Horkheimer 'displays a certain amount of acrimony absent from Habermas's earlier essays.' See 'The Dialectic of Enlightenment Revisited', p.4.

unconsciously hypostatizes the dialectic of enlightenment it claims to escape. Meanwhile, Habermas invokes the image of ideal speech as a corrective: a figure of reconciliation as utopian as any appearing in Adorno's work.

Part of the reason for this concordance probably lies in a biographical datum so obvious it is easily overlooked. Up until Adorno's death, Habermas was probably the theorist closest to Adorno, divergent from him only in a willingness to place a little more emphasis on the positive side of the dialectic of enlightenment. The widening of this change of emphasis into a gulf between enlightenment (Habermas) and its other (Adorno) is in part a quasi-Oedipal tactic on Habermas's part. Most philosophers exaggerate their distance from their theoretical fathers, whilst reproducing more of the paternal character than they dare admit.

Adorno's concept of mimesis is the basis for Habermas's concept of open and undistorted communication: 'Drawing upon his discourse ethic, Habermas reinterprets mimesis as pure sympathetic identification with another person, culminating in an understanding between them utterly free of compulsion.'¹ If my argument that Adorno has already provided a model for such relations in his analysis of childhood desires is correct, then the notion that Habermas is concretising Adorno's concept of mimesis by transposing it into linguistic terms is mistaken. Habermas is actually abstracting from Adorno's model, not enhancing it. Whitebook wonders whether

the notion of reconciliation [has] become so attenuated in the move from negative dialectics and aesthetic theory to communication theory that it no longer sufficiently resembles the original desideratum to count as a solution?²

¹Alford, 'Nature and Narcissism', p.186. Also see M. Hansen, 'Mass Culture as Hieroglyphic Writing', p.71.

²Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.161.

As Adorno's talk of childhood mimesis makes clear, non-linguistic imitation is crucial in identity formation, which is more than a process of language acquisition.

Despite these important divergences, certain elements of Habermas's analysis of Adorno suggest that the shift from Adorno's aesthetic preoccupations to Habermas's appropriations from empirical social science and linguistic pragmatics is almost a matter of a historical change in philosophical taste than of political substance. This is ironic, because Habermas is keen to critique the concept of taste in Nietzsche. Habermas suggests that Adorno's taste for the dark dead-end of negative dialectics is determined by Adorno's formative historical context, the collapse of the insipid and decadent Weimar republic into fascism. The implication is perhaps that this mirrors Nietzsche's position on the brink of the series of clashes between imperialistic nation-states which darkened his own historical horizon.

Habermas is confident that 'we no longer share this mood.'¹ The idea of mood seems to me to be about as voluntarist and weak as the concept of taste. Habermas's confidence in a shift of mood certainly involves the error, exposed by Adorno and Horkheimer, of 'pliable trust in the objective tendency of history.'² To the yes and no of my palate, which has the advantage over Habermas's text of witnessing events in the former Yugoslavia (etc.), Adorno's sober injunction to keep in mind not only catastrophes past but those yet to come,³ is preferable to Habermas's communicative optimism. Habermas chides Adorno for his negativity, but it is only through resolutely confronting the negative that the philosophical substance of communicative rationality could actually be

¹Habermas, *Philosophical Discourse*, p.106.

²Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.41.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.320.

groped for, without idealistically proceeding beyond the material, bodily basis of its potential and its denial.

The persistence of barred possibilities in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics* relies on the presence of impulsive nature in man, a presence whose depth-dimension is set out by both Nietzsche and Freud. It is no coincidence that nature, which for Adorno holds both hope as the non-identical, and dread as blind domination, almost drops out of sight altogether in Habermas's philosophy. The price of separating out the communicative and emancipatory interests from the technical one and insisting on a strict demarcation of these realms of validity, is that the sensuous aim of a reconciliation with nature is abandoned to a technical logic, which arguably retains the basic character of instrumental rationality. Habermas's silence on the deep consequences of our natural origins underpins his general neglect of the physical body: a typical fault of all varieties of the philosophical linguistic turn.

This is clear in Habermas's purely social-hermeneutic reading of Freud in *Knowledge and Human Interests*,¹ and in his rejection of the anarchistic erotic component of Adorno's utopia of non-repressive sublimation. The rather sociologistic tendency of Habermas's system lends a curiously abstract tone to his laudable concern with individual psychopathologies prompted by diremptions within the lifeworld. Habermas loses the expressive energy of Adorno's tortuous Freudian-Nietzschean concern for the corporeal.² Horkheimer and Adorno followed Zarathustra's injunction that the body should be sacred to philosophy, but in a largely negative manner designed to avoid the pitfalls of unmediated vitalism. Thwarted desire marks the alienation from the

¹J. Habermas (1972), *Knowledge and Human Interests*, trans. J. Shapiro, New York: Beacon Press.

²See Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.580-582 on these limits of Habermas's alternative to Adorno.

body that is the centre of both Freud and Nietzsche's diagnoses of the modern condition, and these insights lose their substance if transposed into the jargon of the linguistic turn to intersubjectivity. If Freud and Nietzsche are right to maintain that the linguistic subject, the I, is created through an alienation from the body, then Habermas's faith in the healing power of consensus is premature.

Habermas, in fetishising the communicatively open moment into an abstract and practically autonomous principle, supposedly capable of founding a neo-Enlightenment democratic polity, is himself guilty of wishful thinking, all the more repressive since it comes masked as pragmatism, unlike Adorno's more openly utopian moment. Adorno, too, extrapolated from certain potentials of reason to recoup an emancipatory moment, but insisted more rigorously on the intractable psychological contradictions binding the subject to the apparatus that produces it. Understanding the depth dimension of these contradictions requires an engagement with the idea of the psychological internalisation of archaic biological, historical and social processes developed by Nietzsche and Freud, an idea which generates a whole constellation of concepts common to genealogy and psychoanalysis. This constellation, and Adorno's interventions in it, provides the focus of the next section.

III: Nietzsche, Freud, and Adorno's Critique of the Super-Ego.

Despite his famous celebrations of evanescent surface appearances and the multiplicitous masks of Dionysus, Nietzsche the critical psychologist looks, like Freud, to the depths. The striking commonalities between the psychological investigations of these two men can be made initially obvious by providing a few extracts from one section (no. 23) of Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*:

All psychology has hitherto remained anchored to moral prejudices and timidities: it has not ventured into the depths [...] in so far as to see in what has hitherto been written a symptom of what has hitherto been kept silent. [...] A genuine physio-psychology has to struggle with unconscious resistances in the heart of the investigator, it has the 'heart' against it: even a theory of the mutual dependence of the 'good' and the 'wicked' impulses causes, as a more refined immorality, revulsion to a conscience still strong and hearty - and even more a theory of the derivation of good impulses from wicked ones. [...] psychology shall again be recognised as the queen of the sciences, to serve and prepare for which the other sciences exist. For psychology is now once again the road to the fundamental problems.¹

However, Adorno moves beyond the psychologism of Nietzsche and Freud, considering it dated, overtaken by the economic incorporation of individuality.

As late as in Nietzsche's time the psychological ideals were still the proper target for criticism, but today it is even more the psychological ideal as such, in all its

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.53-54. Hayman's *Nietzsche* provides excellent, but scattered, details on the connections between Nietzsche and Freud, esp. see p.196-197 (Nietzschean notion of pleasure principle), p.200 (on Freud's comment that Nietzsche's 'premonitions and insights often agree in the most amazing way with the laborious findings of psychoanalysis'), p.202 (on parent-child relations), p.290-291 (on the id) and p.301 (on civilisation and the unconscious).

various forms, that should come under attack. No longer is individual man the key to humanity.¹

The predominance of social factors makes psychological man a dying species. But Adorno relies on the psychological concept of internalisation to take him beyond psychology: 'In revealing the super-ego as an internalised social norm, psychology breaks through its own monadological barriers. These in turn are social products.'²

The study of childhood memory reveals how estranged from our experience we are, because "memory" is so often a screen of internalised moral introjects and phantasies. Comparable to the secondary revision of dreams, these screen recollections of an idealised childhood are often a coded version of real childhood yearnings, such as the desire to become like the longed-for parents. These mimetic desires are crucial in social reproduction, but wringing social insight from their recollection involves wresting the critical spirit away from the hope that ontological solidity can be found within the self. We dig into our memories, only to find a primordial experience of wanting to be something different. All this is crucial to Adorno's critique of the existentialist cult of authenticity which Nietzsche encourages, despite himself. Adorno uses Nietzsche's psychological method to rescue him from the mistake:

It is precisely undeviating self-reflection - the practice of which Nietzsche called psychology, that is, insistence on the truth about oneself, that shows again and again, even in the first conscious experiences of childhood, that the

¹Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.85.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.282. On the Frankfurt view of the super-ego, aggression and authority, see Slater, *Origin and Significance of the Frankfurt School*, pp.100-107. Slater prefers Reich's account of these things, because he rejects the biological root of aggression, seeing Thanatos as distorted Eros, if it is anything. I feel that Slater is neglecting the critique of aggression in *Negative Dialectics*, which mounts a similar historical critique to Reich's, but Slater's account of the psychoanalytic debate is very clear.

impulses reflected upon are not quite 'genuine'. They always contain an element of imitation, play, wanting to be different. The desire, through submergence in one's own individuality, instead of social insight into it, to touch something solid, ultimate being, leads to precisely the false infinity which since Kierkegaard the concept of authenticity has been supposed to exorcise.¹

Disposing of the existentialist appropriation of Nietzsche's psychology of authenticity, the above passage absolutises inauthenticity instead. Adorno nevertheless touches a sort of solid bottom of his own when he dives into the self: the primacy of social objectivity, the source of that inauthenticity:

Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense. All its content comes from society, or at any rate from its relation to the object. It grows richer the more freely it develops and reflects this relation, while it is limited, impoverished and reduced by the separation and hardening it lays claim to as an origin.²

Nietzsche and Freud provide many important insights into this 'separation and hardening' celebrated by the ego as its identity, laboriously pulled away from nature but reproducing the violence of nature nonetheless. But according to Stefan Breuer, who refers to Habermas's critique of Adorno's Nietzscheanism, Adorno's location of these problems as historically prior to capitalistic social differentiation is dubious. It

brings critical theory so close to the naturalist, irrationalist critique of civilization and culture (which he otherwise fought so energetically) that they can hardly be distinguished. To Adorno, as to Horkheimer, history appears as the persistence of its origin, as 'the heritage of violence,' just as it did to Nietzsche or Freud, who could only conceive of history *sub specie aeternitatis* as 'the eternal return of the same,' the permanence of the

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.153.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.154.

'archaic legacy.' And in the final analysis Adorno anchors this origin in nature, just as bourgeois materialism and biologism had done.¹

Breuer is not impressed by Adorno's oscillation between this essentialistic originology and an open moment of social contingency in which Adorno professes a belief that things could have been different:

the alternative he offers, however, is no less inadequate than the 'natural history' explanation: the recourse to 'archaic, arbitrary seizures of power' is just as mystifying and speculative as Nietzsche's discussion of the genealogy of morals. In this discourse, according to which everything was decided by 'an irrational catastrophe at the origins,' there is no place for a materialist analysis of the forms of thought and of sociation.²

Actually, Adorno effectively holds that critical interpretations of Nietzsche and Freud yield just what Breuer thinks is missing: 'a materialist analysis of the forms of thought and of sociation.' Adorno does to Nietzsche and Freud what Breuer and Habermas want to do to Adorno: to identify and fill the social deficit in the theory. Yet Adorno seems to be more sensitive to the latent social theory in Nietzsche and Freud than Breuer, whose argument turns on a series of well worn Marxist assumptions: that everything bad starts with capitalism, that the only analysis of sociality which counts is a sociological one, and that Nietzsche and Freud are simply biologicistic irrationalists.

Actually, *On the Genealogy of Morals* is among the more restrained and empirically substantiated of Nietzsche's works, dominated by his

¹S. Breuer (1993), 'The Long Friendship: On Theoretical Differences between Adorno and Horkheimer,' in Benhabib *et al* (eds), *On Max Horkheimer*, Cambridge MA, MIT Press, p.274. However, Breuer qualifies his endorsement of Habermas's critique in a way that ought to alter his own: 'Habermas overlooks the fact that the best arguments against this turn are to be found in Adorno himself.' (p.279, n16).

²Breuer, 'The Long Friendship,' p.274-275

philological feel for careful linguistic research. His notion that the concepts of good and bad depend on the history of colonial domination written into language by victorious classes and races is carefully supported. The roots of positive words are related to some feature of the master race, whilst denigratory terms denote the vanquished. In other words, good=noble, bad=plebian:

The most convincing example of the latter is the German word *schlecht* [bad] itself: which is identical with *schlicht* [plain, simple] [...] and originally designated the plain, the common man, as yet with no inculpatory implication and simply in contradistinction to the nobility. About the time of the Thirty Years' War, late enough therefore, this meaning changed into the one now customary.¹

Thoroughly historical, Nietzsche ferrets out similar examples in Greek and Aryan tongues.² That Nietzsche is happy enough with this dichotomy, and in the end sees it as a healthy expression of the will to power of the victorious group, does not reduce the depth of the insight, or the chance of critically appropriating it. It *is* a social insight, whatever its epistemological and political status in Nietzsche's work. Nietzsche is clear about the subject-constituting power of inherited linguistic habits, and this itself provides elements of a linguistic theory of socialisation not entirely dissimilar from Habermas's own, but retaining a theory of drives as the object of that socialisation. Nietzsche's critical philology, with its orientation on the linguistic consequences of social struggle, surely provides a foothold in Nietzsche for Breuer's required 'materialist analysis of the forms of thought and of sociation.'

Similarly, to accuse Freud of historical and sociological blindness is all very well, and undoubtedly captures a real problem with his theory but,

¹Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.28.

²Hayman gives a good account of all this in *Nietzsche*, p.306.

as I have already argued in previous chapters, the accusation neglects Freud's insights into the dynamics of familial socialisation and its links to the historical development and decline of various forms of patriarchal power in civilised societies.

Before further considering the interacting influences of Adorno's appropriations from Nietzsche and Freud, it is as well to bear in mind a dictum of Nietzsche's which Adorno quotes in *Minima Moralia*:

Against Mediators.- Those who want to mediate between two resolute thinkers show that they are mediocre; they lack eyes for seeing what is unique. Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes.¹

Adorno extends this into a dialectical requirement: Do not produce abstract generalities from the levelling of particular perspectives. Critical thought should be 'neither entrenched nor detached, neither blind nor empty, neither atomistic nor consequential.'² So, it is inadvisable to lump Freud and Nietzsche together and then throw in Adorno for good measure, levelling out the unique features of the thought of each. This tactic dominates sociological critiques of these psychologists. Bringing out the differences as well as the commonalities between these thinkers is vital for understanding why Adorno dabbles in the unfashionable world of psychological drive theories and just what critical intervention he hopes thereby to secure. As I suggested at the end of the last section, what is at stake is the question of the depth and strength of the principle of individuation, its historical and biological determination and the question of whether, and how, to try to escape it.

¹F. Nietzsche (1974), *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, p.212. Quoted by Adorno in *Minima Moralia*, p.74.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.74.

Joel Whitebook quotes the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and then Axel Honneth in order to diagnose the trouble with neglecting the depth dimension of the subject in an over-hasty shift to a sociologistic theory of intersubjectivity. This is the problem with Habermas's 'transition from psychoanalysis to cognitive psychology,' which results in

a decorporealization of Critical Theory. [Habermas's] move entailed a departure from the 'underground' history of Europe, namely the history of the body and 'the fate of the human instincts and passions which are displaced and distorted by civilization,' which had been so crucial for Horkheimer and Adorno. Honneth observes: '[Habermas's] investigation is directed exclusively to an analysis of rules ... so that the bodily and physical dimension of social action no longer comes into view. As a result, the human body, whose historical fate ... Adorno ... had drawn into the center of the investigation ... loses all its value within a critical social theory.' [...] Freud's drive theory is not a biologicistic doctrine but a theory of the frontier between *soma* and *psyche* [...] that, as such, can still provide a point of departure for reincorporating the body into Critical Theory.¹

So, whilst accusing Nietzsche, Freud and Adorno of essentialising natural origins, Habermas makes the opposite error:

Habermas's linguistic transcendentalism prevents him from adequately reaching the extra-linguistic reality of external (especially living) nature. Considered from the other direction, towards the inside [...] it also prevents him from adequately reaching the prelinguistic reality of inner nature, which is to say, the unconscious.²

Whitebook draws attention to the convergence of Nietzsche and Freud's interest in the bodily dimension of the unconscious, a convergence obvious in their shared use of the concept of the 'it'

¹ Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.83.

² Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.166-167.

(translated as the 'id' in Freud's works in English). George Groddeck suggested Nietzsche's concept to Freud.¹ In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche notes that

a thought comes when 'it' wants, not when 'I' want; so that it is a *falsification* of the facts to say: the subject 'I' is the condition of the predicate 'think'. *It* thinks: but that this 'it' is precisely that famous old 'I' is to put it mildly, only an assumption, an assertion, above all not an 'immediate certainty'.²

Freud adopted the 'it' as part of his mature metapsychology, a replacement for the systematic-topographical use of the concept of the unconscious, which became a simple adjective:³

we will no longer use the term 'unconscious' in the systematic sense and we will give what we have hitherto so described a better name and one no longer open to misunderstanding. Following a verbal usage of Nietzsche's and taking up a suggestion by Georg Groddeck, we will in future call it the 'id' [German *Es*, it]. This impersonal pronoun seems particularly well suited for expressing the main characteristic of this province of the mind - the fact of its being alien from the ego.⁴

However, Whitebook makes it clear that despite the adoption of Nietzsche's term, Freud rejected totalising accounts of the id. His earlier reference to it in *The Ego and the Id* is cautiously worded, qualifying Nietzsche and Groddeck's 'hypostatization' of it into 'the commanding factor in psychic life'.⁵ Whitebook, like Freud, wants to hold out hope for a renewed concept of sublimation which can show the role of culture in

¹ Hayman gives a very similar account to Whitebook of the Nietzsche-Groddeck-Freud links in his *Nietzsche*, p.290-291.

²Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.47.

³Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.99-101.

⁴Freud, *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, p.104.

⁵Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.100.

working through the demands of the id, finding an autonomous but non-repressive channel for the drives:

The autonomous subject would no longer be heteronomously, that is to say, passively, determined by the id, *a tergo*, with Groddeck and Lacan, but would establish an active relation towards fantasy life that would no longer be defensively warded off.¹

So, while Freud recognises Nietzsche's contribution to drive-theory, he softens its determinism. Freud's account is more sensitive to social avenues for the modification of instinct. Nietzsche is prepared to endorse discharges of instinct which Freud's commitment to a relatively orthodox concept of civilisation precludes. That Adorno numbered Groddeck, who was something of a sensualist, among the 'the most gifted'² analysts suggests that Adorno may have tended to go in the other direction, following Nietzsche. But what he actually does is to play Freudian and Nietzschean notions of health against each other in a social critique of both Nietzsche's superman and Freud's genital character. Adorno criticises both the surrender to instinct and its rigid control because they are sides of the same coin: socially conditioned alienation from the body and its needs.

Nevertheless, Adorno makes it clear that Nietzsche's concept of the superman, capable of affirming the eternal return, is something more sophisticated than a simple surrender to primitive instinctual desires. Adorno criticises Freud's relation of the prehistoric primal father to Nietzsche's superman. In his *Group Psychology*, Freud says of that father:

He, at the very beginning of the history of mankind, was the 'superman' whom Nietzsche only expected from the

¹Whitebook, *Perversion and Utopia*, p.118. Also see my Chapter One, Section V, for a discussion of Adorno's views on sublimation.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.68.

future. Even to-day the members of a group stand in need of the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader; but the leader himself need love no one else, he may be of a masterful nature, absolutely narcissistic, self-confident and independent.¹

In 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda,' Adorno is happy to use this as a portrait of Hitler,² but rejects it as a portrait of Nietzsche's superman, who is meant to reap the benefits of all types of morality and stages of the spirit, not regress to any particular one of these, least of all that of the primal father:

It may not be superfluous to stress that Nietzsche's concept of the Superman has as little in common with this archaic imagery as his vision of the future with fascism. Freud's allusion is obviously valid only for the 'Superman' as he became popularised in cheap slogans.³

Adorno instead relates the superman to the psychoanalytic ideals of the genital character and well-developed super-ego, attacking all three on the grounds that they all leave aside the question of social freedom:

A 'blond Siegfried' is the phrase with which Benjamin characterised the ideal of the genital character that was in vogue about 20 years ago among psychoanalysts; in the meantime they have come to prefer well-balanced people with a well-developed superego instead. The 'good' Freudian uninhibited by repressions would, in the existing acquisitive society, be almost indistinguishable from the hungry beast of prey and an eloquent embodiment of the abstract utopia of the subject. The psychologists attack on their scapegoat can be paid back with interest by a social critique of the superman whose freedom remains false, neurotically greedy, 'oral', as long as it presupposes unfreedom.⁴

¹Freud, *Group Psychology*, p.156.

²Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda,' p.126.

³Adorno, 'Freudian Theory and Fascist Propaganda,' p.179 n20.

⁴Adorno, 'Sociology and Psychology Part Two', p.84.

There is a certain conceptual slippage occurring here as Adorno attempts a dialectical critique of the psychological images of man provided by Nietzsche and Freud. In one remark, Adorno criticises Freud for collapsing the superman into the image of the primal father, but in the other himself confuses the superman with the beast of prey. He implies that the Freudian ideal character is both under-repressed, because a lack of repression in an unfree economy simply endorses exploitation, and over-repressed, because of its strong super-ego which endorses a permanent deferral of gratification.

For Adorno, the super-ego is an historically internalised equivalent to Kant's categorical imperative.¹ This mundane root to the supposedly transcendental principle undermines Kant's confidence that the moral imperative is a product of the autonomous subject:

it was in the real compulsion of conscience that Kant read the coercive features he ingrained in the doctrine of freedom. The empirical irresistibility of the super-ego, the psychologically existing conscience, is what assures him, contrary to his transcendental principle, of the factuality of the moral law - although, for Kant, conscience ought to disqualify factuality as the basis of autonomous morality, as much as it disqualifies the heteronomous drives.²

This introduces another level of complexity, because this Kantian connection generates two lines of argument involving Nietzschean and psychoanalytical critiques of the super-ego. Adorno usually weaves the two together, but I have tried to separate them. In the first, Adorno adopts elements of Nietzsche's critique of the socially conformist conscience. This critique is also supported by Adorno's radicalisation of Ferenczi's critique

¹Whitebook relates Kant to Freud in some detail in *Perversion and Utopia*, pp.119-121.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.271.

of the super-ego. In the second, Nietzsche and Kant are both accused of generating solipsistic models of autonomous subjectivity. In this, Adorno accepts that the psychoanalytic concept of the super-ego, by conceptualising the social genesis of conscience, harbours certain potentials for solidarity.

Adorno's Critique of Conscience.

In his *Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche produces a critique of the 'bad conscience,' which is similar to Freud's critique of the harsh super-ego. Nietzsche describes the internalisation of slave morality which establishes the bad conscience;

Inasmuch as ever since there have been human beings there have also been human herds (family groups, communities, tribes, nations, states, churches), and always very many who obey compared with the very small number of those who command - considering, that is to say, that hitherto nothing has been practised and cultivated among men better or longer than obedience, it is fair to suppose that as a rule a need for it is by now innate as a kind of *formal conscience* which commands: 'thou shalt unconditionally do this, unconditionally not do that', in short 'thou shalt'. This need seeks to be satisfied and to fill out its form with a content; in doing so it grasps about wildly, according to the degree of its strength, impatience and tension, with little discrimination, as a crude appetite, and accepts whatever any commander - parent, teacher, law, class prejudice, public opinion - shouts in its ears.¹

This is a critical version of the social dimension of the super-ego described by Freud, who talks positively about extra-familial influences which supplement the Oedipal beginning of conscience. Nietzsche's suspicion about these influences plays a role in the Frankfurt critique of the historical externalisation of the super-ego caused by the social colonisation of paternal authority.

¹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.120.

Freud sets out a chain of internalised authorities very similar to Nietzsche's but, unlike Nietzsche, Freud is relieved to have found something in man to counter the accusation that psychoanalysis produces a debased image of humanity.¹ Despite this traditional respect for morality, Freud is under no illusions about its origins, sharing Nietzsche's scepticism about any claims for a primary moral capacity in humans:

We may reject the existence of an original, as it were natural, capacity to distinguish good from bad. What is bad is often not at all what is injurious or dangerous to the ego. Here, therefore, there is an extraneous force at work, and it is this that decides what is to be called good or bad. Since a person's own feelings would not have led him along this path, he must have had a motive for submitting to this extraneous influence. Such a motive is easily discovered in his helplessness and his dependence on other people, and it can best be designated as fear of loss of love.²

Nietzsche and Freud concur on the instinctual source of the energy channelled into the conscience. Aggression, provoked by the struggle for survival and the authorities which threaten the self with the removal of love, becomes an aggressive criticism of the self, which is reproached for demanding satisfaction in the first place. Nietzsche diagnoses certain socio-cultural forces which insist particularly firmly on this masochistic inversion of the aggressive drive:

wherever man allows himself to be persuaded to self-denial in the *religious* sense, or to self-mutilation, as among Phoenicians and ascetics, or in general to desensualisation, decarnalisation, contrition, to Puritanical spasms of repentance, to conscience-vivisection and to a Pascalian *sacrifizio dell'intelletto*, he is secretly lured and urged onward by his cruelty, by the dangerous thrills of cruelty directed *against himself*.³

¹See Freud, *The Ego and the Id*, p.374-376.

²Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.316.

³Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p.159-160.

Freud notes that the self-reproaches of conscience are reproaches originally directed against the authorities, which have been forced to turn back against the self by the superior power of those authorities. Freud is quite clear that this is also a solution of the social problem of what to do about aggressive discontent with the demands of civilization. The frustrated individual's aggression is turned into self-blame. It is

introjected, internalized; it is, in point of fact, sent back to where it came from - that is, it is directed towards his own ego. There it is taken over by a portion of the ego, which sets itself over against the ego as super-ego, and which now, in the form of 'conscience', is ready to put into action against the ego the same harsh aggressiveness that the ego would have liked to satisfy upon other, extraneous individuals.¹

Freud identifies the catastrophic consequences of a rampant super-ego, which if uncontrolled could lead to a permanent sense of guilt for crimes real or imagined and eventually suicide, the ultimate introversion of aggression. Jessica Benjamin indicates the scope of internalised self-blame, which is powerful enough to alter the subject's image of reality:

the creation of an internal censoring agency involves the conscious denial of the experience of fear and is helpless in the face of the authority figure. It means the repression of the reality which demands repression. Internalization, in the sense of self-blame and guilt, means not only assuming the attitude of the other as one's own, but also assuming responsibility for the other's acts as inevitable responses to one's own behavior.²

¹Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.315.

²J. Benjamin (1978), 'Authority and the Family Revisited: Or, a World without Fathers?', in *New German Critique*, no. 13 1978, pp.35-57, p.39.

But Freud does not wish to dismantle the super-ego entirely, claiming it includes valuable gains for humanity and the individual, preventing the latter from a destructive pursuit of gratification that would drive it up against the limit of society and nature. Psychoanalytic therapy aims to keep the more rational elements of the conscience whilst weakening its ties to the primal aggression of the id. In Freud's theory, the super-ego is a hybrid of ego and id, and Freud wants to aid the ego element of conscience against its primal side.

As I suggested in Chapter One, Adorno provides several objections to this neat division, problematising the traditional goal of therapy. These criticisms are similar in spirit to Nietzsche's strident critique of the masochistically bad conscience. Adorno invokes the far-reaching vision of the early analysts: 'The Freudian School in its heroic period [...] used to call for a ruthless criticism of the super-ego. The super-ego was recognized, then, as blindly, unconsciously internalized social coercion.'¹

Adorno approvingly quotes Sandor Ferenczi, who at his most penetrating realised that only a 'razing of the super-ego as such can accomplish a radical cure.'² This notion evolved when Ferenczi was confronted by his own powerful counter-transference, forced by the reactions of a patient into catching his own venting of aggression against her. He realised that often, the critique of the patient's super-ego simply replaced it with the analyst's. But Adorno shows that even Ferenczi eventually capitulated to a more orthodox caution in this matter, defending the 'normal' super-ego as healthy. With a Nietzschean

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.272.

²Ferenczi, quoted by Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.272. According to Adorno's translator, the relevant passages have been omitted from the English edition of Ferenczi's works. It is well known that Freud began to become uneasy with Ferenczi's bolder observations, and it is possible that Ferenczi has been edited to reflect this disapproval. See J. Masson (1992), *Against Therapy*, London: Fontana, esp. Chapter Three 'Ferenczi's Secret Diary', pp.113-133. Masson provides many useful details, but his whole account is distorted by his over-vehement polemic against psychoanalysis.

scepticism towards moralistic equivocation, Adorno attacks this ideology of normalcy, which becomes the norm in conformist psychoanalysis:

Psychoanalysis, clinging to its fatal faith in the division of labor, uncritically receives this view of normalcy from the existing society. As soon as it puts the brakes of social conformism on the critique of the super-ego launched by itself, psychoanalysis comes close to that repression which to this day has marred all teachings of freedom [...] A critique of the super-ego would have to turn into one of the society that produces the super-ego.¹

Adorno's Critique of Subjective Solipsism.

However, even the dialectician, Adorno does not leave his considerations of conscience there. He sees hidden within it a rational potential, but not in its normal manifestation. Adorno puts forward a psychological equivalent of the Marxist notion that the economic coercions of capitalism contribute to a ripening of the forces of production capable of unleashing a qualitative change in the form of society, and in the concept of freedom itself:

freedom need not remain what it was, and what it arose from. Ripening, rather, in the internalization of social coercion into conscience, with the resistance to social authority which critically measures that authority by its own principles, is a potential that would rid men of coercion. In the critique of conscience, the rescue of this potential is envisioned - not in the psychological realm, however, but in the objectivity of a reconciled life of the free.²

Adorno appears to be duplicating the strategy he has criticised - rescuing one element of the conscience whilst criticising the other. But the

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.273-273.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.275.

social solution to the tension between over and under repression is radicalised by Adorno to the point where he wants to escape the dichotomy altogether. It is not a question of balancing the two sides of the super-ego, but of using the division to reflect on its determination by social objectivity. It is this objectivity which has two sides, and with this Adorno refutes once more the charge that he conceives society in entirely negative terms:

Undividedly entwined in such [social] objectivity are the antagonistic moments: heteronomous coercion and the idea of a solidarity transcending the divergent individual interests. The part of conscience that reproduces the tenaciously persisting repressive mischief of society is the opposite of freedom; it is to be disenchanted by evidence of its own determination.

The universal norm which conscience unconsciously appropriates, on the other hand, bears witness to whichever part of society points beyond particularity as the principle of its totals. This is its element of truth [...] it takes the repressive form of conscience to develop the form of solidarity, in which the repressive one will be voided.¹

Adorno therefore has to resist the dichotomous response of either endorsing or condemning the super-ego, since its struggle with itself (ultimately the struggle between ego and id) is a reflection of social antagonism. Instead of focusing on individual solutions to the conflict, as Nietzsche does with the image of Zarathustra turning his back on the herd who have rejected him, and as Freud does with various notions of the healthy individual, Adorno wants to escape the whole dichotomy absolutely. 'The question of freedom does not call for a Yes or No; it calls for theory to rise above the individuality that exists as well as above the society that exists.'²

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.282.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.283.

An essential consideration here is the currently intractable clash between individual gratification and the freedom of others. With this we confront the problem of human aggression. Adorno suggests that the pursuit of individual freedom in an unfree whole is bound to harm others:

How much aggression is so far inherent in freedom can be seen whenever, in the midst of general unfreedom, men act as if they were free. In a state of freedom, the individual would not be frantically guarding the old particularity.¹

In this Adorno is deploying Nietzsche against Freud, and Marx against both of the former. Nietzsche's superman gets beyond the bounds of self-preservation as he affirms forces which decentre Freud's more conventional subject. It is this utopian moment which Adorno wants to rescue from Nietzsche's otherwise solipsistically defined personal conditions for a shift to a new identity. Marx provides the essential optimism which lies behind Adorno's apparent pessimism, holding out hope that the overcoming of economic exploitation could remove the necessity of aggressively following naked self interests: 'A change in the conditions of production might relieve the violent picture which the world shows to its violator.'²

Freud was well aware of such economic arguments, and explicitly rejected them as naive, sticking to his belief in the ineradicability of human aggression:

The communists believe that they have found the path to deliverance from our evils. According to them, man is wholly good and is well-disposed to his neighbour; but the institution of private property has corrupted his nature.

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.283.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.284. Also see note 2, p.296 of this thesis.

[...] If private property were abolished, all wealth held in common, and everyone allowed to share in the enjoyment of it, ill-will and hostility would disappear among men. I have no concern with any economic criticisms of the communist system; I cannot inquire into whether the abolition of private property is expedient or advantageous. But I am able to recognize that the psychological premises on which the system is based are an untenable illusion.¹

Freud then lists a range of factors, such as sexual jealousy, childhood rivalry and inter-group conflict to confirm aggression as an 'indestructible feature of human nature.'² Adorno cannot really provide concrete refutations of this pessimism, but instead radicalises the scope of the changes required to get beyond aggression. Adorno makes the Russian revolution look like small beer. He concurs with Freud's rejection of actually existing communism, and accepts the conclusion that changing the state of things requires nothing less than unleashing the possibility of a form of subjectivity with less desperate ties to the principle of individuation. This principle produces a self chained to its own preservation at the cost of denying the better possibility of a more open subject: 'the subject is not a subject yet - and its not being a subject is due precisely to its instauration as a subject. The self is what is inhuman.'³

However, all Adorno can offer against Freud is a gesture to a concealed possible future, another version of Adorno's utopian 'if,' supplemented with a knife-edge defence of moral impulse against either its systematisation or its abandonment:

Black shrouds cover the horizon of a state of freedom that would no longer require repression or morality, because drives would no longer have to be expressed in destruction. It is not in their nauseating parody, sexual

¹Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.304.

²Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, p.304.

³Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.299.

repression, that moral questions are succinctly posed; it is in lines such as: No man should be tortured; there should be no concentration camps [...] But if a moral philosopher were to seize upon these lines and to exult at having caught the critics of morality, at last - caught them quoting the same values that are happily proclaimed by the philosophy of morals - his cogent conclusion would be false. The lines are true as an impulse, as a reaction to the news that torture is going on somewhere. They must not be rationalized; as an abstract principle they would fall promptly into the bad infinities of derivation and validity.¹

In this self-consciously vulnerable position Adorno seeks to conserve the Nietzschean critique of systematic thought alongside an anti-Nietzschean conception of mimetic sympathy which disturbs his autarky. This mimetic sympathy is the unconscious core of the solidarity Adorno glimpses developing behind the conformist dimension of the conscience. So, although Adorno is following psychoanalysis in appealing to a rational moment of the super-ego, he reverses its (and his) normal recommendations and appeals to the rationality of the unreflective and immediate impulse over its more systemised elements. In exposing this fragile formulation (almost a morality of gut-feelings), Adorno is throwing himself on the mercy of his readers, allowing them the chance to fall in love with his delicate utopia, or to join in the easy rejection of it. 'Love you will find only where you may show yourself weak without provoking strength.'²

It would be very easy to repeat Freud's scepticism about the project of escaping aggression, or Nietzsche's affirmation of ineradicable inequality to counter Adorno, but these manly refusals of the promise of loving solidarity are more neurotic than the seemingly silly utopianism Adorno offers instead, a utopianism he optimistically suggests has

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.285.

²Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.192.

persistent instinctual sources of its own (presumably gesturing towards Freud's Eros, historically enriched):

Neuroses are pillars of society; they thwart the better potential of men, and thus the objectively better conditions which men might bring about. There are instincts spurring men beyond the false conditions; but the neuroses tend to dam up those instincts, to push them back towards narcissistic self-gratification in the false condition. Weakness that will mistake itself for strength, if possible, is a hinge in the machinery of evil.¹

This sort of weakness can be discovered in Nietzsche's fear of intimacy and tenderness, as well as in Freud's robustly bourgeois "man-of-the-world" pragmatism. In Section VII of Chapter Three, 'Limits of Adorno's Quasi-Messianic Freud-Marxism,' I suggested that Adorno could not entirely escape these authoritarian elements, channelling them into aggressive critiques of one sort or another. But often enough to rescue himself, Adorno counters these authoritarian weaknesses, which masquerade as strength, with weaknesses that know themselves as such, and are not afraid of admitting it. This enables Adorno to beat most of the critics to it, applying his critique of the modern individual to himself:

The theory of the ego as a totality of defense mechanisms and rationalisations is directed against the individual as ideology, against the same *hubris* of the self-controlled individual that was demolished by more radical theories of the supremacy of the object. Whoever paints a correct state of things, to meet the objection that he does not know what he wants, cannot disregard that supremacy, not even as supremacy over him. Even if he could imagine all things radically altered, his imagination would remain chained to him and to his present time as static points of reference, and everything would be askew. In a state of freedom even the sharpest critic would be a different person, like the ones he wants to change.²

¹Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.298.

²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p.352.

The admission of personal inadequacy is a mark of the strength of Adorno's childlike and enigmatic wish for something else, and is to be preferred over its opposite, a grown-up sort of strength which condemns hope as immaturity. The brittle sort of strength is the strength worshipped by the authoritarian personality, the theory of which I revisit in my final section.

IV: The Rancorous Authoritarian.

These dialectics of strength and weakness are important as part of the Nietzschean component of Adorno's theory of anti-Semitism. Adorno's critique of Nietzsche keeps his antipathy towards anti-Semitic German nationalism and the critique of *ressentiment*, but partially reverses the polarity of Nietzsche's judgements about the relationship of *ressentiment* to master and slave morality.

The Frankfurt School's earliest outline for a 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism', drafted by Adorno and Horkheimer in 1939 and published in 1941, includes a sketchy section on anti-Semitism in the German philosophical tradition. This concentrates on noting anti-Semitic traits in apparently humanistic or liberal writers. In contrast, the brief mention of Nietzsche is wholly positive. Adorno claims that Lessing and Nietzsche were the only Germanic philosophers really enthusiastic about the Jews, promising that 'in the study itself we shall deal extensively with Nietzsche's positive attitude towards the Jews.'¹ This extensive treatment of Nietzsche never actually materialised in the *Studies in Prejudice*, which were a pale shadow of the project outlined originally. But a critical appropriation from Nietzsche does play an important role in 'Elements of Anti-Semitism,' *Minima Moralia* and *The Authoritarian Personality*.

The speculative notion of a psychological typology, begun in the early 'Research Project' and defended in Adorno's sections of *The Authoritarian Personality*, is itself similar in style to Nietzsche's shrewd if exaggerated classification and hybridisation of types, such as the beast, the master, the slave, the nihilist, the child, and so on. Adorno reviews the usual arguments against typologies, some of which are a political-existential protest against the reification inherent in pigeon-holing people,

¹Adorno *et al* 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism', p.147.

and some of which are methodological objections which question the statistical basis for the typology. Adorno robustly defends the coherence of theoretical speculation, suggesting that the statistical-methodological objections 'may well turn out to be acts of sabotage of organised science against productive thinking.'¹ This sort of scepticism regarding statistical methods ensured a productive tension between Adorno and the American members of the research team, and the glib tone of philosophical confidence exuded by Adorno understandably irritated those seeking to eradicate speculation and replace it with empirically certified social-scientific procedure. Pecora instead celebrates Adorno's Nietzschean challenge:

I would like to claim that this capacity to mock and parody the dominant discourses of social analysis in the modern human sciences is precisely what makes Nietzschean genealogy so attractive a weapon to those who would intervene in the seemingly automatized exertions of modern authority.²

More potent objections to typology come from the social critique of labelling as a power-bound classification, the veracity of which critique was nakedly exposed by the classificatory badges of the concentration camps. Adorno admits there is a 'truly humane impulse'³ in such critiques of typology, and dialectically translates it into a form culled immanently from the psychological investigations informed by his own typology: 'To express it pointedly, the rigidity of constructing types is itself indicative of that "stereopathic" mentality which belongs to the basic constituents of the potentially fascist character.'⁴ Nevertheless, Adorno

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.349.

²Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.112.

³Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.347.

⁴Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.348.

suggests that the rigidities of any typology are, at least in part, a truthful reflection of objective social tendencies towards the massification and class differentiation of modern populations. If this is true, then the humanistic-existential critique of typology is a well-meaning obscuration, and the critical spirit should not shrink before the Nietzschean-Freudian willingness to look such unpleasantness directly in the eye:

Individualism, opposed to inhuman pigeonholing, may ultimately become a mere ideological veil in a society which actually *is* inhuman and whose intrinsic tendency towards the subsumption of everything shows itself by the classification of people themselves. In other words, the critique of typology should not neglect the fact that large numbers of people are no longer, or rather never were, 'individuals' in the sense of traditional nineteenth-century philosophy [...] There is reason to look for psychological types because the world in which we live is typed and 'produces' different 'types' of persons.¹

In addition to the Nietzschean ancestry of Adorno's critical typology, the whole theory of psychological displacement and scapegoating expressed in Freudian terms in *The Authoritarian Personality* is informed, as was Freud, by Nietzsche's account of the channelling of guilt and envy into self-hatred or the hatred of others. It can be summarised for now using a dictum extracted from *The Gay Science*: 'Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we others will be his victims.'²

But there are no explicit references to Nietzsche's books in *The Authoritarian Personality*. One reason for this could be that the American Jewish Committee which sponsored the research into anti-Semitism would not have shared the Frankfurt School's open-minded critique of Nietzsche, who in the 1940s was very much tarred with the Nazi brush.

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.349.

²Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, p.233.

So, the Nietzschean themes which partially inform the book (or at least Adorno's sections of it) sit in an uneasy tension with its liberal-democratic orientation. Adorno's Nietzschean motifs, always given some sort of critical twist anyway, here submerge entirely, becoming a hidden current beneath the liberal interpretation of Freud which dominates the surface of the work, in a manner calculated to appeal to its initially American audience.

In this respect, *The Authoritarian Personality* provides elements of a positive dialectic of enlightenment less obvious in the more openly philosophical works of the Frankfurt School. As well as a typology of high scorers on the Fascism scale, the book provides one on low scorers. Their humanistic and empathic rationality is described using traditionally enlightened notions extensively criticised in Nietzschean style in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Nietzsche could never endorse attitudes like this:

The link between this sympathy and rationality [in low scorers] is the idea of *justice*, which has come to work, in certain people, spontaneously, almost as if it were instinctually. To the low scorer, racial discrimination violates the basic principle of the equality of all men. In the name of human rights he tends to identify himself with those who are discriminated against and who thus appeal to his own spontaneous feeling of solidarity with the oppressed.¹

The ideal type of low scorer is described as a *Genuine Liberal*: 'The construct of the *Genuine Liberal* may be conceived in terms of that balance between superego, ego, and id which Freud deemed ideal.'² This formulation seems to regress behind Adorno's extension of psychoanalysis into a critique of identity which explodes Freudian metapsychology, an extension which has dominated this thesis so far. But

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.339.

²Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.373.

that this liberal ideal is a construct more than a reality (which is not so true of the genuinely typified authoritarian syndrome), fits Adorno's themes of a decline in individual autonomy and the death of the Freudian subject, as well as remaining faithful to Adorno's negative method. That Adorno could bring himself to use such orthodox formulations nevertheless serves to bolster the realisation that a defence of reason, not an annihilation of it, is the core impetus of the Frankfurt School dialectic. Adorno's tortured experience of exile makes his on-the-spot account of liberal America sound like something out of Dante's trip to hell, obscuring his respect for aspects of American intellectual life. Hohendahl reports on Adorno's later, and more sympathetic, recollections of his American experiences.¹ Adorno says in the 1960s that the spirit of American enlightenment appealed to him.

The Nietzschean motifs in *The Authoritarian Personality* emerge more clearly when constellated with the more explicit engagement with Nietzsche in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Minima Moralia*. Nietzsche illuminates authoritarian phenomena both reflectively in elements of his theory of slave morality, and also unconsciously in his repetition of those phenomena. As Pecora notes:

perhaps it is only to be expected that the philosopher whose notions of will to power, *ressentiment*, herd mentality, and biological mysticism were often invoked and applied by a genocidal, totalitarian regime should also supply some of the clearest critical insights into the creation of that regimes's mania. At least, this is the dialectical motive at the heart of critical theory's Nietzschean turn.²

¹P.U. Hohendahl (1992), 'The Displaced Intellectual? Adorno's American Years Revisited', in *New German Critique*, no. 56 Spring-Summer 1992, pp.76-101, p.97.

²Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.125.

Capturing both sides of this appropriation from Nietzsche, Wiggershaus notes that a 'critical application of Nietzsche's dictum "What is falling should be given a push"'¹ lies behind various passages of 'Elements of Anti-Semitism.' Wiggershaus's observation lets us interpret these passages (such as the one describing the taboo on mimetic tenderness discussed in the last chapter) as a critique of the authoritarian fear of weakness exhibited by Nietzsche in the dictum. This fear is a crucial component of anti-Semitism, which directs it at those made weak by social conditions. In the chapter of the *Dialectic* on the dark writers, this destructive tendency in de Sade and Nietzsche is seen as an expression of the inner truth of competitive society: 'The weak and unsuccessful must perish.'²

The way anti-Semitism portrays those hated for weakness as a terrible threat can nevertheless be illuminated using Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*. Walter Kaufmann identifies this concept as 'one of his major contributions to psychology.'³ Pecora talks of 'the corrosive *ressentiment* at the heart of all authoritarianism.'⁴ Nietzsche explicitly recommends a course for psychologists obviously noted by Adorno: 'To the psychologists first of all, presuming they would like to study *ressentiment* close up for once, I would say: this plant blooms best today among anarchists and anti-Semites.'⁵

¹Wiggershaus, *The Frankfurt School*, p.339.

²Adorno's translator here translates from a German edition of Nietzsche's writings. The quote and reference are in Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p.97. In Nietzsche's English works, the passage is to be found in F. Nietzsche (1990), *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, trans. R.J. Hollingdale, London: Penguin, p.128 (Section 2).

³W. Kaufmann (1989), 'Editors Introduction' to Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, pp.3-12, p.7.

⁴Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.122.

⁵Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.73.

And yet in Nietzsche it is the perspective of enslaved races, such as the Jews,¹ that first produces a bitterly resentful moral conception of their masters, who are deemed *evil*, rather than simply bad.² Nietzsche's anti-Semites inherit a twisted version of the Jewish resentment against the Egyptians and Romans who enslaved them, and turn it against the Jews who persecuted the early Christians. Nietzsche liked to bait devout anti-Semites by reminding them that Christianity was a Jewish sect. Either way, resentment is originally an envy of the power and happiness of the masters.³ Nietzsche quotes at length from various Christian tracts which delight in the punishments God will meet out to those who oppose his Christian brethren.⁴ Thomas Aquinas tells us 'The blessed of the kingdom of heaven will see the punishments of the damned, *in order that their bliss be more delightful for them.*'⁵

The Nazis certainly exploited remnants of Christian religious hostility towards the Jews, in a strange hybrid with pagan and eugenic elements. The Christian protest against the Jews is described in Adorno's draft for the 'Research Project on Anti-Semitism:'

The Jews have crucified Christ. They have remained impenitent for thousands of years. They particularly ought to have been summoned to recognize him since they were witnesses of his activity and of his passion, but they have persisted in denying him. [...] The Jew is Judas.⁶

¹Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.33-34. Adorno agreed that the history of the Jews could foster masochism (*The Authoritarian Personality*, p.331). Adorno was never afraid to mention the negative psychological consequences of oppression, which include various unpleasant traits which then feed back into the oppressor's view of the victim he has made.

²Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.39.

³Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.124

⁴Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.48-52

⁵Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.49. This is the translator's loose rendering of the Latin quoted by Nietzsche.

⁶Adorno *et al*, 'Research Project,' p.148.

In 'Elements of Anti-Semitism' the culturally Oedipal component of the Christian resentment of the Jew is noted. The religion of the Son and the ideal of brotherhood war with the religion of the Father and the patriarchal ideal. In *The Authoritarian Personality*, the personal repression and problematic discharge of Oedipal resentment is the crucial dimension. The individual and cultural versions of these mechanisms can both be interpreted using Nietzsche's discussion of the vicissitudes of masochism in various forms of slave morality.

A consideration of the role of the ascetic priest is central to Nietzsche's discussion of Judaeo-Christian resentment. This priest channels the dangerous accumulations of resentment and envy, which pollute intra-group relations as well as inter-group relations. The priest

fights with cunning and severity and in secret against anarchy and ever-threatening disintegration within the herd, in which the most dangerous of all explosives, *ressentiment* is constantly accumulating. So to detonate this explosive that it does not blow up herd and herdsman is his essential art, as it is his supreme utility [...] the priest *alters the direction of ressentiment*.¹

The astonishing turn effected by Judaeo-Christian morality is the prophet's clever expedient of convincing his masochistic followers that they are the source of their own problems. Freud describes similar processes at the heart of mentally disturbing familial processes of the sort identified as authoritarian by the Frankfurt School. Nietzsche's comments parody the Christian image of the shepherd and his flock:

'I suffer: someone must be to blame for it' - thus thinks every sickly sheep. But his shepherd, the ascetic priest, tells him: 'quite so my sheep! someone must be to blame for it: but you yourself are this someone, you alone are to blame for it - *you alone are to blame for yourself!*' - This is

¹Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.126-127.

brazen and false enough: but one thing at least is achieved by it, the direction of *ressentiment* is altered.¹

Nietzsche was well aware that this sort of asceticism could become something even more twisted, talking near the end of *On the Genealogy of Morals* of

the anti-Semites, who today roll their eyes in a Christian-Aryan-bourgeois manner and exhaust one's patience by trying to rouse up all the horned-beast elements in the people by a brazen abuse of the cheapest of all agitator's tricks, moral attitudinizing (that no kind of swindle fails to succeed in Germany today is connected with the undeniable and palpable stagnation of the German spirit; and the cause of that I seek in a too exclusive diet of newspapers, politics, beer, and Wagnerian music, together with the presuppositions of such a diet: first, national constriction and vanity, the strong but narrow principle '*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles*,' and then the *paralysis agitans* [shaking palsy] of 'modern ideas').²

Despite its playfully eccentric dietary determinism (which reaches a hilarious zenith in *Ecce Homo*, where the German spirit is related to 'distressed intestines'³), Nietzsche's brisk sweep through the popular culture of nineteenth century anti-Semitism obviously succeeds in capturing acutely the beer-hall character of German fascism in the twentieth.⁴ The description of scapegoating in *The Authoritarian Personality*, which generally tries to avoid focusing on this well-worn

¹Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.127-128.

²Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.158-159.

³F. Nietzsche (1989), *Ecce Homo*, trans. Kaufmann, New York: Vintage, p.238. The whole notion of philosophical digestion is both a literally physiological notion, and a complex metaphor for the mutual interdependencies of philosophical systems. These nourish *and* poison each other, and their human consumers.

⁴The pubs frequented by BNP supporters in the Derby/Nottingham borderlands are like this, too. Just substitute burgers for *Bratwurst*, *God Save the Queen* for *Deutschland, Deutschland*, and *The Sun* for the *Kreuzzeitung*.

notion, is expressed in Freudian terms which also almost exactly reproduce the language of Nietzsche's discussion of the leader's displacement of herd resentment into self-blame. The ego-weak anti-Semite

must find some 'guilt' responsible for their precarious social situation: otherwise the just order of the world would be disturbed. In all probability, they primarily seek this guilt within themselves and regard themselves, preconsciously, as 'failures.' The Jews relieve them superficially of this guilt feeling.¹

In summary, by using Nietzsche's typology of slavish perspectives we can understand a series of possible strategies for dealing with pent up guilt and resentment. First we have the original Jewish slave morality, expressed in a masochistic relationship with God the Father, Moses and the prophets. This masochism persists in the rebellious Christian form of slave morality, which grows out of the Jewish one. Christians can direct some of their ascetic self-blame for sinfulness against the Jewish and Roman non-believers. In the case of fascism, the dynamic interaction alters again, allowing the masses to paradoxically identify with the masterly critique of the slavish herd mentality. The fascist directs a slavish resentment at the Jews while himself enslaving them using all the ferocity of the blond beast. The rancorous authoritarian sees himself as a master, but is really a moral slave, chained to his projective condemnation of the Jews, seen as evil monsters who snatch happiness for themselves at everyone else's expense. This is really a screen for the neediness of the prejudiced individual. It is they who are greedy for what they feel they have been denied: 'This sense of victimization goes hand in hand with

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.358.

very strong underlying possessive and appropriative desires.'¹ What the prejudiced really hate is their own neediness. The anti-Semite 'seems to terrorize himself even while he terrorizes others.'²

This historical alteration of the interactions of master and slave moralities leads Adorno to counter Nietzsche's attitude towards ascetic ideals. If the master can be resentful, as Adorno's critique of the lion's consciousness as ideology suggests, then the slave can be clear-sighted. The fascist system reacts against ascetic ideals in a subtle manner which becomes a parody of Nietzsche's intentions. An ideological surface of heroic and moralistic puritanism, firmly in the slave tradition, is supplemented with an administered dose of permissive pleasure (such as the holiday camps, stimulants and pornography) which allows a mimicry of individualistic and masterly hedonism. This state of affairs also describes the current role of the culture industry, which compensates for otherwise strict and moralistic forms of government. The purchasers of Gold Blend coffee and Ferrero Rocher chocolates can identify with the masterly luxury mimicked in the advertisements, but the more subtle enjoyment is provided for those who buy slightly better chocolates, whilst feeling knowingly superior for seeing through the promise of the adverts. For Adorno, these developments render Nietzsche's critique of ascetic ideals redundant: 'Ascetic ideals constitute today a more solid bulwark against the madness of the profit-economy than did the hedonistic life sixty years ago against liberal repression.'³

¹Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.324. Adorno's consideration of the familial dynamics which condition child development under conditions of socially imposed scarcity mentions sibling rivalry (see Chapter One, Section I: 'Adorno's Psychoanalysis of Authoritarian Irrationalism'). This suggests a psychoanalytic mechanism for the creation of a resentful hard-done-by mentality, preyed on by social instability in later life.

²Adorno *et al*, *The Authoritarian Personality*, p.325.

³Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.97.

The pseudo-hedonistic promises of the Nazi collective and the consumerist culture industry compensate for rational resentment, spawned by the basic economic irrationality of class inequalities in post-scarcity societies. Adorno puts forward such economic factors as a replacement for Nietzsche's identification of physiological and racial causes of resentment:

If in Germany the common citizen has proved himself a blond beast, this has nothing to do with national peculiarities, but with the fact that blond bestiality itself, social rapine, has become in face of manifest abundance the attitude of the backwoodsman, the deluded philistine, that same 'hard-done-by' mentality which the master-morality was invented to combat.¹

Adorno's positive acceptance of values condemned as slavish by Nietzsche extends further than this. Adorno carries through a 'transvaluation of Nietzsche's transvaluation.'² The non-prejudiced low scorers on the F-Scale could be positively described as having regressed from the form of slave morality which displaces its self-hatred onto others, back to the original type in which the self is the target of the reflexive critique of conscience. The 'lows' consequently suffer from many of the "weaknesses" of slave thinking identified by Nietzsche: hesitation, lack of confidence, doubt, guilt and a fear of hurting others that may amount to a form of social paralysis in the face of oppression. These "weaknesses" are all appropriated as delicate features of Adorno's fragile negative dialectics. The capacity for self-critique is vital, as long as it does not become masochistic.

¹Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.96-97. However, Adorno's theory of mimetic familial inheritances over generations, meant as a substitute for scientific racism, surely does allow for 'national peculiarities?'

²Pecora, 'Nietzsche, Genealogy, Critical Theory', p.121.

Adorno channels the doubts and weak vacillations which are the marks of genuine openness in the direction of social critique. Still looking for something to blame instead of the victim, Adorno turns the critique of the self into a critique of society, implicitly rejecting Nietzsche's condemnation of socialism.¹ Given this, it may be tempting to imagine that where ascetic priests try to channel resentment to keep the herd at peace, Adorno *wants* to 'blow up herd and herdsman'² or, rather, the social system which has conditioned them. This is the sort of interpretation of critical theory used by some to justify supposedly revolutionary violence. But the problem is, the use of aggression to counter the conditions that have created it simply continues the cycle of *ressentiment*. Against violence, Adorno (like Zarathustra³) sought an end to rancour. In *Minima Moralia*, a text containing a strong critique of conformist sublimation, Adorno nevertheless provides an eloquent definition of it: 'Every work of art is an uncommitted crime.'⁴ We could say: "Every work of Adorno's is an unthrown Molotov," for it is the task of critical theory to turn righteous anger into the thought of what it would take to escape it:

Whoever thinks is without anger in all criticism:
thinking sublimates anger. Because the thinking person
does not have to inflict anger on himself, he furthermore
has no desire to inflict it on others.⁵

¹Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols/The Anti-Christ*, p.98. Nietzsche sneers at the idea of the revolution as a remnant of the Christian beyond. I suggest Adorno critically reappropriates both images.

²Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, p.126.

³Hayman quotes Zarathustra's highest hope: 'That man will be delivered from vengeance.' *Nietzsche*, p.262

⁴Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p.111.

⁵Adorno, 'Resignation', p.175.

CONCLUSION.

My overall aim has been to draw attention to the crucial importance, subtle depth, and continuing relevance of the psychoanalytic dimension of Adorno's theory, by bringing together the literature which conserves this perspective against more dominant sociologicistic receptions of his work, such as those of Jameson and Habermas.

In Chapter One, my account of Adorno's critique of authoritarianism hopefully showed how unwise it would be to try to replace the influence of Freud with some other psychology. Even at his most anti-Freudian moments, such as the occasions on which Adorno savages conformist psychotherapy, Adorno relies on an immanent critique of psychoanalysis. I suggested one reason for mistakenly thinking otherwise is that Adorno's obvious critique of Freud is in certain respects glib and over-exaggerated, whereas his philosophical appropriations from Freud are elusive and understated, until one learns how to spot them. Some of Adorno's best work comes out of his critical encounter with Freud, as I suggested with regard to Adorno's "Proustian" autobiography. The idea of a world fit for the openness of childhood is a potent one. My examination of this idea yielded the realisation that concrete psychoanalytic theories play a role in Adorno's supposedly vague and (merely) aesthetic normative conceptions of a utopian relation with otherness. This allowed me to generate an account of the deep role of psychoanalysis, both as part of Adorno's philosophical constellation, and as a crucial source for the very notion of such a constellation.

Having justified in my first chapter my claim that there is value in a closer examination of Adorno's psychoanalysis, in Chapter Two I went on to apply this perspective to a reading of the psychoanalytic aspects of Adorno's reading of Kafka. Following Wiggershaus, I established

psychoanalysis as a crucial aspect of Adorno's readings of dark literature, showing how important the Freudian tactic of taking apparent exaggerations seriously is in Adorno's dialectic. These readings led me into questions surrounding Adorno's ambivalent religious identity, and I attempted to demonstrate the complex links between psychoanalysis and Adorno's quasi-theological aesthetic notions. This hopefully lent some substance to the sometimes vague references made to the Frankfurt School's Jewish theoretical background. I ended Chapter Two by venturing into the sort of psychobiography eschewed in Adorno's reading of Kafka, in order to draw attention to some of the contradictions and self-deceptions in Adorno's work. My exaggerated psychoanalysis of Adorno accuses him of a Messiah complex and covert authoritarianism, but only in order to rescue him from himself. I am acutely aware of the hubris implicit in this tactic of trying to praise Adorno's self-awareness whilst eagerly pointing out its limits, but it is a tactic learned from Adorno himself. His theory demands the posthumous production of an immanent critique of its own assumptions and rigidities.

Having accused Adorno of becoming so cold that his theory has frozen up, I tried to warm up my portrait by showing in Chapter Three how Adorno's theory of mimesis in *Aesthetic Theory* conserves some sort of animal heat in its hidden erotic utopia, a utopia involving a psychoanalytic appreciation of sexual difference and of art's obscure roots in prehistoric magical practices. Adorno shows how the repression of mimesis gives it a dangerous double-edge - its return may be aesthetically progressive (modernist art) or world-historically regressive (fascist psychology). I attempted to make this dual character of repressed mimesis clearer through an application of Freud's theory of comedy to Adorno's readings of literature and society. I used this application to pull together

some of the thoughts on childhood which have gradually emerged in this thesis as a distinctive part of my reading of Adorno's theory.

In my final chapter, I sought to provide another type of account of humanity's historical "childhood," bringing forward the Nietzschean element of Adorno's work. This was both demanded by Adorno's theory, and intended as a reminder that my Freudian focus is as partial in its own way as sociologistic readings of Adorno. Nietzsche's new psychology is part of Adorno's psychoanalysis of exaggeration, and I defended Adorno against Habermas's anti-Nietzschean critique by rallying some of the more recent literature problematising Habermas's linguistic turn. As with Adorno's appropriation of Freud, his encounter with Nietzsche involves a stringent critique which conserves a critical edge by moving where others fear to tread. I showed how Adorno makes use of Nietzsche's critique of anti-Semitism as a way of returning with a different perspective to the critique of authoritarian irrationalism with which I began my account of the influence of Freud on Adorno.

I conclude this conclusion with one final justification for retaining elements of Adorno's problematic devotion to a theory unafraid of seemingly silly Freudian and Nietzschean exaggerations. Rather than contaminating Adorno's often scanty contributions to the traditional social sciences, or the project of overtly political emancipation, Adorno's dystopian and utopian speculations, by trying to reach out to the crushed and fragile remnants within us all of something other to the bad totality, serve as still crucial reminders of what it is we are trying to emancipate.

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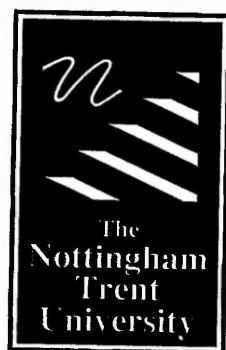
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