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Adorno's "Addendum" to Practical Reason

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Adorno's "Addendum" to Practical Reason

by

Michael H. Walschots

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through Philosophy
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University of Windsor

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a discussion of Theodor Adorno's concept of the "addendum". In contrast to Immanuel Kant who claimed that free and moral action amounts to pure reason alone being the cause of action, Adorno believes that a physical impulse is required for action to take place. This thesis begins by discussing Kant's philosophy in the first chapter and moves to a discussion of the addendum in the second. In the third chapter I discuss the addendum's place in Adorno's moral philosophy. In that there is always a physical component involved in action, Adorno believes that some materially motivated action can be morally good. Specifically, it is the impulsive response to suffering and physical pain that Adorno believes is morally good because, as I suggest, it is only by so responding that the Holocaust can be prevented from happening again.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my parents, Harry and Margaret Walschots. Their unconditional support of my studies and their everlasting pride in me and my accomplishments has helped me through numerous stresses in my life. Without them this thesis would have never come to be.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

In a four-page section of Theodor Adorno's 1966 magnum opus *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno discusses a concept he terms "the addendum" (*das Hinzutretende*).¹ Although he claims the term is "somewhat arbitrarily chosen" (HF 229), its name is appropriate because it refers to the physical element Adorno claims must be added to the Kantian notion of pure reason if it is to become practical and action is to take place.²

¹ The term "addendum" (*das Hinzutretende*) first appears in Adorno's lectures on history and freedom; more specifically in the nineteenth lecture in this series given on January 26, 1965 (see HF 183). This first mention of the term comes with the comment made by Adorno that he used this term elsewhere, but where Adorno used the term before this date has not been determined. In his collected works, the term appears in the form of a noun only in *Negative Dialectics* (1966) and "Marginalia to Theory and Praxis" (1969). The term *hinzutretende*, an adjective, appears in numerous places and occasionally, in *Zur Metakritik der Erkenntnistheorie* and in *Ästhetische Theorie*, as a noun but only to refer to an "addition" rather than to the concept of the addendum as discussed in the section in *Negative Dialectics*.

² *Das Hinzutretende* has been translated as "the addendum" by E.B. Ashton, as "the additional factor" by Rodney Livingstone, and as "the

Given the relatively little attention this term has received in the world of Adorno scholarship,³ this project hopes to give the concept its first extensive treatment.

In *Negative Dialectics*, the section on the addendum appears in a nearly one hundred-page section that discusses the concept of freedom by way of what Adorno calls a “model”. In the preface to *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno explains that models “are not examples; they do not simply elucidate general reflections” (ND xx). On the contrary, “[g]uiding into the substantive realm, they seek simultaneously to do justice to the topical intention of what has initially, of necessity, been generally treated” (ibid.). Put more simply, models, for Adorno, “serve the purpose of discussing key concepts of philosophical disciplines and centrally intervening in those disciplines. For philosophical ethics this will be done by a dialectics of freedom” (ibid.).⁴

supplementary” by Dennis Redmond. While each of these translations conveys the idea of an addition to pure reason, I adopt “addendum” throughout this thesis.

³ There is only one article in German that deals with the concept exclusively (Eckart Goebel’s ‘Das Hinzutretende. Zur Negativen Dialektik’. *Frankfurter Adorno Blätter*. Band IV. München 1995, p. 109 - 116). Other places where the concept is treated, both in English and German, give it only limited attention and tend to focus on only a small number of points Adorno wishes to make with the concept.

⁴ There is much about Adorno’s conception of model that I cannot discuss here. For a fuller treatment of Adorno’s use of this term see Henry W. Pickford’s

In order to centrally intervene into the discipline of philosophical ethics, therefore, Adorno dialectically treats the concept of freedom. The particular model Adorno uses in order to discuss this concept is what he calls the “prescientific” (HF 185) problem of free will. This problem is the question of “whether human beings are free to make their own decisions and, more particularly, whether they are internally or externally free or whether they are determined” (HF 185).

As a model, Adorno uses this problem as a point of entry into a dialectical discussion of, in this case, the concept of freedom and philosophical ethics. In this introduction, I set the stage for what follows by discussing the historical and philosophical framework in which Adorno advances the notion of the addendum. What I wish to do in this introduction in particular is discuss Adorno’s reflections on freedom as well as introduce the problem that will preoccupy the remainder of this project; the mind/body problem or, as it is in Kant’s philosophy, the problem of pure reason becoming practical. To do so, I briefly discuss the problem of free will and Adorno’s issues with the idea of monadological freedom. I then focus on what Adorno feels is a key feature of the concept of freedom, i.e. its historical nature, in order to introduce the mind/body problem. This problem is the historical precursor to the Kantian question of pure reason’s practicality and the realization of freedom, which, as we shall, is the position to which Adorno responds with the idea of the addendum.

‘Critical Models: Adorno’s Theory and Practice of Cultural Criticism.’ *The Yale Journal of Criticism* 10.2 (1997): 247-270.

Monadological Freedom vs. Social Freedom

To reiterate, the problem of free will that Adorno uses as a model is the question of “whether human beings are free to make their own decisions and, more particularly, whether they are internally or externally free or whether they are determined” (HF 185). Adorno claims the idea of external determination, where humans are not free and their actions are the necessary effects of certain external causes, is usually ignored immediately because “the traditional view ever since Locke has been that the *internal* ability or freedom of decision is supposed to be independent of external pressure” (HF 185, emphasis added).⁵ Adorno calls this view “the monadological construction of the free will” (HF 185) because it presupposes an understanding of the subject as a monad. Indeed, Adorno claims that “every theory of free will or unfree will begins life as a monadological theory, as a theory of subjectivity” (HF 185).

The monadological theory of subjectivity is, as may be apparent, influenced by Leibniz’s conception of the monad. In the *Monadology* Leibniz asserts

There is no way of explaining how a monad can be altered or changed internally by some other creature, since one cannot transpose anything in it, nor can one conceive of any internal motion that can be excited, directed, augmented, or

⁵ According to Locke, “*liberty* is a power to act or not to act according as the *mind* directs” (Locke 1996, 112, emphasis added).

diminished within it, as can be done in composites, where there can be change among the parts. The monads have no windows through which something can enter or leave. Accidents cannot be detached, nor can they go about outside of substances, as the sensible species of the Scholastics once did. Thus, neither substance nor accident can enter a monad from without (as cited in Carlin 2007).

To call the subject a monad, then, is to assert that the internal, subjective realm is untouchable by what is external; nothing can enter, alter or change what is internal to the subject. Indeed, Adorno even refers to the monadological subject as one who is in “windowless isolation” (ND 219). To say that the will is monadologically constructed, then, is to say that free will, understood as something internal, is unaffected by externality, i.e. that the subject is free “whether on the throne or in chains” (Hegel 1977, 121), to use a famous line from Hegel.

Adorno argues that the monadological theory of subjectivity cannot be maintained because he believes there are at least two important ways in which externality encroaches upon all that is deemed untouchably internal according to this theory. First, Adorno believes that the doctrine of “interiorization” shows that “external pressures are continued internally” (HF 185). Influenced by Freud’s notion of the superego, Adorno believes we internalize numerous aspects of the external world such that we cannot regard our own internal realm as isolated in any way. With respect to freedom and the will in particular, Adorno claims “countless moments of external – notably social – reality invade the decisions designated by the words ‘will’ and ‘freedom’; if the concept of the rationality of the will means anything at all, it must refer precisely to that invasion” (ND 213). Jay Bernstein explains this argument in the following way:

All the ideas, concepts, opinions, ways of weighing them that an individual employs in deliberating are already socially formed ... [W]hat an action means, what action an individual can be thought to perform, is not fully 'up to' the individual, his or her intention. No clear theoretical boundary can be drawn between 'my will' and the social facts that invade every decision I make. Actions do not mean monadologically (ADE 256-7).

Opposed to the monadological construction of subjectivity and free will, therefore, Adorno believes that what is internal can be and is affected by various aspects the external world. In this way, then, the notion of the subject as a monad cannot be maintained.

The second reason why Adorno believes the monadological construction of free will cannot be maintained is because " ... in pathogenous states ... consciousness learns about its unfree side – in compulsive neuroses, for instance. They bid it act, within the circumference of its own immanence ... freedom is denied in its own native realm" (ND 222). With such compulsive neuroses, "the I has its unfreedom demonstrated to it – by the feeling that 'this isn't me at all'" (ND 222). In these cases, therefore, the supposedly monadological subject is not as isolated as it thinks itself to be. Here it is not external reality proper, but the subject's own "inner foreign territory" (see Whitebook 2004, 66) that demonstrates to the subject its own unfreedom. Our drives and instincts, for example, are parts of ourselves that are not fully in our control. When our instincts determine us to act, we experience parts of ourselves as outside of our control. This, according to Adorno, is what should convince us that we are not as isolated as the monadological theory of subjectivity claims.

In sum, then, since externality has an impact on internality and the subject's own inner foreign territory demonstrates its own unfreedom, Adorno believes the monadological theory of freedom, internal freedom, cannot be maintained. Adorno's own approach to the problem of free will in general is that we should be wary of definitively answering "the question whether there is free will" (ND 211) despite the fact that legal and penal processes and morality and ethics depends upon the answer (see ND 211). Adorno claims "[a] question's urgency cannot compel an answer if no true answer is obtainable" and says that if we can resist the urge to answer the question of free will then "[w]e would not have to reflect on the topics under discussion by judging their being or nonbeing" (ND 212). Indeed, in the freedom model Adorno critiques the idea that freedom and the will are things that exist. Explaining how he views freedom in contrast to the "traditional" view, in *History and Freedom* Adorno asserts "I have not attempted to follow the philosophical custom of discussing freedom as the 'essence' of individual human beings, but ... I regard it as something social" (HF 183). In contrast to purely individual or monadological freedom, Adorno claims that "freedom has no meaning at all" in abstraction "from the contexts in which we find ourselves as living, social individual beings" (HF 178). Indeed, one of the ways in which Adorno dialectically understands freedom is that it must at the same time be individual and social: it must involve the freedom of the individual within society. As he puts it, "without the freedom of the species, without the social species in general, there is no such thing as individual freedom" (HF 178).

Adorno's interesting and detailed discussion of freedom is much too extensive to appropriately deal with in a project of this size. So far we have seen that Adorno rejects

the idea of inner freedom and claims that freedom must be individual and social at the same time. As we shall see in the coming chapters, Adorno believes that internality and externality cannot be drastically separated because he believes that mind and matter are not entirely separate from one another. The addendum captures Adorno's position with respect to how human beings act, and it is a response to the position that free and moral action amounts to pure reason becoming practical on its own. Adorno sees numerous problems with this latter position primarily because it assumes that mind and body are *entirely* distinct categories. Before turning to Adorno's position regarding the relationship between mind and matter, I wish to discuss the problem of pure reason becoming practical when mind and body are assumed to be entirely distinct. In order to discuss this problem, I turn to one of the most important ideas connected to Adorno's reflection on freedom; the idea that freedom is an historical category.

History and Freedom

Adorno claims that "the problem of freedom is historical in nature" (HF 240). What Adorno means by this is that the prescientific problem of freedom in the sense discussed above, i.e. whether or not the human being is internally free or unfree, is linked to a certain historical shift. Adorno believes that the idea of inner freedom could only arise once a fundamental shift took place in the way individuals pre-philosophically understood themselves in contrast to the Middle Ages. In the Middle Ages, for example, Adorno claims that the prevailing pre-philosophical self-understanding was such that "[t]he individual did not see himself as an autonomous thinking being whose reason

stood opposed to an external order. On the contrary, the individual regarded himself as an integral part of that order” and in this sense the individual “felt at home in the world”; the individual and world were “a self-contained totality” (HF 232).

Around the time when Shakespeare was writing, however, Adorno claims that a chasm “opened up between consciousness and action” that “is connected with the gulf between inner and outer that must have come as a great shock at around this period, a shock that we can scarcely imagine and that has been reflected in philosophy in the writings of Descartes, Shakespeare’s near contemporary” (HF 231-2). Adorno explains the significance of this chasm or gulf in the following way:

This change brought about by processes within the philosophy of history meant that, as a knowing, rational being, the conscious human subject withdraws his actions from the realm of the irrational, corrupt, bad reality confronting him, but it also means that the entire relation of the individual to this reality becomes problematic (HF 233).

In contrast to the understanding of the individual and the world as a self-contained totality that was present in the Middle Ages, the widespread pre-philosophical understanding of the world changed during the sixteenth century such that a gulf was placed between what is internal to the subject (reason, consciousness, mind) and all that belongs to the external, physical, and material world. As Adorno mentions, this creates the problem of how what is internal to the subject (consciousness, mind, reason) is related to outer, material, physical reality. In order to better grasp this separation of subject and reality and the problem of their relation, it will be beneficial to briefly turn to Descartes himself, in whose writings Adorno claims this gulf was first encoded.

In his *Meditations*, Descartes distinguished between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*. These refer to “two kinds of substance: matter, of which the essential property is that it is spatially extended; and mind, of which the essential property is that it thinks” (Robinson 2007). As Adorno puts it, the distinction is between “the inner, ‘thinking’ substance and the outer reality to which action belongs” (HF 232). This distinction is what is known as Descartes’ substance dualism. As Jaegwon Kim explains in more detail,

Descartes envisaged two disjoint domains of entities, one consisting of immaterial minds with their mental properties (e.g. thinking, willing, feeling) and the other of material bodies with their physical properties (e.g. size, shape, mass, motion). For Descartes, not only did minds lack spatial extension; they were not in physical space at all. However, the two domains are not to be entirely unconnected: a mind and body can form a ‘union’, resulting in a human being. Although the nature of this ‘union’ was never made completely clear ... it evidently involved the idea that a mind and a body joined in such a union are involved in intimate and direct causal interaction with each other (Kim 2005, 613).

Given this substance dualism, “[t]he main uncertainty that faced Descartes and his contemporaries ... was ... *how* two things so different as thought and extension could interact at all” (Robinson 2007). The problem of how two things as different as an immaterial inner thinking substance and an outer material substance can interact is the question of how the mind can causally interact with the body, and this is what has come to be called the mind/body problem. According to Adorno, “only by means of an artificial and superstitious contrivance was [Descartes] able to explain the way in which one of these [substances] might impinge upon the other – this was the so-called *influx physicus*”

(HF 232). As Rolf Tiedeman describes, the *influx physicus* or “physical influence, is the name Descartes gave to ‘the force with which the souls of men or angels move bodies’” (HF 325, note 5).

Although Adorno believes the gulf between inner and outer and the resulting problem of their relation was *first* codified in the writings of Descartes, Adorno takes another philosopher as his primary interlocutor when using this problem as a model during his reflections on freedom; Immanuel Kant. Although Kant was writing over one hundred years after Descartes, Kant was not immune to the gulf between inner and outer codified in Descartes’ writing. Indeed, it is the particular way in which Kant codifies the gulf between inner and outer, between consciousness and reality, and the problems associated with this gulf that concern Adorno. Accordingly, before discussing the addendum directly, I shall discuss Kant’s philosophy in some detail in this thesis.

My project therefore begins with a discussion of Kant in order to set up the problem to which Adorno responds with the idea of the addendum. The central concern of this thesis, a discussion of the concept of the addendum, will therefore occur in the second chapter. The addendum is not solely a response to Kant, but plays a role in Adorno’s moral philosophy as well. The third and final chapter of this thesis will therefore examine the addendum as a moral addendum. Although the section on the addendum in *Negative Dialectics* is only four pages long and Adorno mentions the concept very rarely outside this section, there are many points that Adorno wishes to make with the concept. In order to see a brief glimpse both of what Adorno wishes to accomplish with this concept and of what I discuss in the coming chapters, I conclude this introduction with an outline of this thesis as a whole.

Outline

In the first chapter I discuss Kant's philosophy and focus on the view to which the addendum is primarily a response: the view that pure reason can be practical. In this first chapter I explain how Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism creates a distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves. The doctrine asserts that the world necessarily appears to us as governed by the law of natural causality. However, when we attempt to complete our understanding of the causal series, reason becomes embroiled in a contradiction. This is the famous Third Antinomy of pure reason in the first *Critique*.

I explain how transcendental idealism solves the Third Antinomy by creating the possibility that natural causality governs all appearances, but that free causality might be a property of things-in-themselves. The human being can also be understood as an appearance and as a thing-in-itself, i.e. according to its empirical and intelligible character. Accordingly, the human being can be understood as both empirically determined yet intelligibly free. I explain that this means that, in order to act freely, a human being must act from pure reason alone. Not only this, but morally good action is also action that is caused by reason alone. Accordingly, performing either a free or a moral action is for pure reason to be practical on its own in Kant's philosophy. I end this chapter with a discussion of the problem with such a position that Kant himself recognized, i.e. the problem of the connection between the empirical and intelligible worlds.

In the second chapter I turn to the focus of this project: a discussion of Adorno's concept of the addendum. Adorno recognizes that the way in which Kant drastically

divided human nature into an empirical and an intelligible being creates problems for the realization of freedom. For Adorno, it is impossible for reason to be practical on its own. In this chapter I discuss how Adorno believes a somatic impulse is necessary for any action to occur. In order to act freely, therefore, an action must involve not only reason or the mind, but impulse as well. I discuss why these two elements are necessary but neither is sufficient on its own to cause a free action. I also discuss how, both somatic and mental in one, the addendum is similar to Freud's notion of instinct as something that is on the frontier between the mind and the body. Indeed, Adorno also adopts Freud's understanding of the mind as having developed out of instinct, i.e. Freud's understanding of the genesis of consciousness. This means that Adorno does not believe that mind and body are completely distinct. Mind is also body, for Adorno, and distinguishing between these two categories is not as easy as Kant thought. I end this chapter with a discussion of Adorno's claim that the addendum is an image of the reconciliation of mind and nature.

In the third and final chapter I discuss the addendum as a moral addendum. Not only free action, but action that has moral worth has both a psychic and a somatic element for Adorno. In this chapter I also discuss how not every action involving these two elements is moral. It is the impulsive response to suffering and physical pain in particular that Adorno wishes to highlight as a moral action, and this is something Kant would have denied. I discuss Christoph Menke's understanding of this impulsive reaction as the impulse to solidarity, as well as Jay Bernstein's comparison of the moral addendum to compassion. In this chapter I also explain how Adorno believes that some moral action needs no justification as to why it ought or ought not be done, and I discuss his claim that, at times, it is irrational to engage in rational deliberation before acting. I

end this chapter with a discussion of why it is the response to suffering in particular that is so important and conclude that responding to this type of situation is important because only such a response can prevent Auschwitz from happening again.

CHAPTER II

KANT

Introduction

As stated in the introduction, Adorno's conception of free action is formulated in large part as a reaction to Kant's conception of free and moral action. Accordingly, in this section I intend to accomplish two things. First, I wish to explain and introduce the conceptual and terminological background that will be necessary to comprehend Adorno's engagement with Kant. Second, I wish to explain the position to which Adorno responds with the idea of the addendum: Kant's view that pure reason can be practical in and of itself. I also want to explain the significance of this position in Kant's philosophy.

I begin by introducing Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism and its distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves. I then discuss how understanding appearances according to the law of cause and effect results in Kant's Third Antinomy. It is precisely the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves that resolves the Third Antinomy and creates the possibility that there is another kind of causality through freedom. In so far as the human being can be understood both as an appearance and as a thing-in-itself, I explain that a free act, according to Kant, means that pure reason becomes practical. I then turn to Kant's moral philosophy and explain how reason is again required to be practical in and of itself in order for what Kant thinks of as a truly moral action to occur. I conclude with a

discussion of the problem of the connection between the empirical and intelligible worlds.

Transcendental Idealism

One of the central accomplishments of the *Critique of Pure Reason* is Kant's "Copernican Revolution" in philosophy. Rather than claiming that knowledge amounts to thought conforming to the nature of objects, Kant claimed that the nature of objects is conditioned by the ways in which we must necessarily experience them. For Kant, what we can know about objects is limited by the conditions that make experience possible, which means the nature of objects is conditioned by the nature of thought itself. These conditions are, above all, space and time as "the pure forms of all our sensible representations of objects" (Guyer 2006, 53). That space and time are the necessary forms of any sensible representation of an object means that "they are *nothing but* the pure forms of our own representations of objects, or forms of the appearances of things rather than forms of things as they are in themselves" (ibid., 53). As Kant explains, "the objects of experience are **never given in themselves**, but only in experience, and they do not exist at all outside it" (CPR A492/B521). In other words, because we necessarily experience objects in terms of spatial and temporal categories, we are unable to experience objects outside of these categories, i.e. as they are in themselves. This distinction between objects as they appear to us and as they are in themselves and the restriction that we can only ever have knowledge of the former that results from it is Kant's doctrine of transcendental idealism.

There are two generally accepted ways in which to interpret transcendental idealism. The first is the “two-object” or “two-world” interpretation, “according to which appearances and things in themselves constitute two ontologically distinct sets of entities” (Allison 1990, 4), i.e. where “the transcendental distinction is ... *primarily* between two kinds of entity, appearances and things in themselves” (ibid., 3). In some respects, this interpretation is similar to Descartes’ substance dualism. The alternative, the “two-aspect” interpretation, holds, according to Henry Allison’s version, that there are “two distinct ways in which the object of human experience may be ‘considered’ in philosophical reflection, namely, as they appear and as they are in themselves” (ibid., 3-4). According to this interpretation, appearances and things-in-themselves are not different entities in two different worlds, so to speak, but are two aspects or ways to consider the same object in one world. That transcendental idealism can be interpreted in these two ways is not particularly relevant to my purposes. As I will show at the end of this chapter, the central problem I am concerned with - i.e. the problem of the interaction between the world of appearance and the intelligible world - remains regardless of which way one reads the doctrine.

Although space and time are the pure forms of intuition, on their own they do not capture all of the ways in which we necessarily experience objects as spatial and temporal. With respect to time in particular, for example, and as Guyer states, “although time is the *a priori* form of all of our experience ‘time itself cannot be perceived’ and must instead be represented through certain ‘*a priori* connecting concepts’ of objects” (Guyer 2006, 105, quoting CPR B219). What this means is that our necessarily temporal experience of objects is not accomplished simply via one single temporal category. Other

a priori concepts structure our experience such that we always experience objects temporally.

One of the other *a priori* connecting concepts required for temporal experience in particular is causality. According to Kant,

if it is a necessary law of our sensibility, thus **a formal condition** of all perceptions, that the preceding time necessarily determines the following time ... then it is also an indispensable **law of the empirical representation** of the temporal series that the appearances of the past time determine every existence in the following time ... in accordance with a rule. For **only in the appearances can we empirically cognize this continuity in the connection** of times (CPR A 199/B244).

This means that, given our temporal experience of objects, we necessarily perceive the world as succeeding according the law or rule of cause and effect. This is to say that objects, insofar as they appear to us, are governed by the law of natural causality.

Causality in accordance with laws of nature therefore means that “everything **that happens** presupposes a previous state, upon which it follows without exception according to a rule” (CPR A444/B472). Experiencing the empirical world as necessarily governed by the law of causality creates a significant problem, however, and this is the problem of the Third Antinomy of pure reason.

The Third Antinomy

As Paul Guyer notes, “reason itself necessarily produces contradictions” and “[t]hese contradictions are the ‘Antinomies of Pure Reason’” (Guyer 2006, 138). One of these contradictions is the result of the application of the category of causality to all experience. To say that all experience is in accord with the laws of nature is to say that the causality of the cause through which something happens is always something **that has happened**, which according to the law of nature presupposes once again a previous state and its causality, and this in the way a still earlier state, and so on (CPR A444/B472).

To say that *everything* that happens presupposes a previous state as its cause upon which it follows according to a rule therefore means that there will be “no completeness of the series on the side of the causes descending one from another” (CPR A446/B474), i.e. an infinite regress will occur, and thus no complete understanding of the causal sequence of appearances is possible.

One way to solve the problem of the infinite regress is to suppose “an **absolute** causal **spontaneity** beginning **from itself**” (CPR A446/B474). In other words, we can posit “the faculty of beginning a state **from itself**, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature” (CPR A533/B561). However, to posit a faculty of this sort is for reason to become entangled in a contradiction, as Kant explains in the Third Antinomy.

The Third Antinomy consists in two contradictory claims. The first claim, or thesis, states that “causality in accordance with laws of nature is not the only one from

which all the appearances of the world can be derived. It is also necessary to assume another causality through freedom in order to explain them” (CPR A444/B472). This is required in order to complete our understanding of the causal series as mentioned above. The second claim, or antithesis, on the other hand, states that “[t]here is no freedom, ... everything in the world happens solely in accordance with laws of nature” (CPR A445/B473). The latter claim is a requirement given causality is a category of experience.

In the section of the first *Critique* on the Third Antinomy Kant lists various arguments supporting both the thesis and antithesis that do not concern us here. What is essential is that the truth of both these contradictory claims seems necessary. In the first two of the four antinomies of pure reason, the problem was that only one of the contradictory claims could be true. In the Third Antinomy, however,

the difficulty we encounter in the question about nature and freedom is only whether freedom is possible anywhere at all, and if it is, whether it can exist together with the universality of the natural law of causality, hence whether it is a correct disjunctive proposition that every effect in the world must arise **either** from nature **or** freedom, or whether instead **both**, each in a different relation, might be able to take place simultaneously in one and the same occurrence (CPR A536/B564).

The latter alternative is precisely how Kant solves the Third Antinomy. Kant shows that the Third Antinomy’s two supposedly contradictory theses are in fact compatible with each other, and he shows this by making reference to transcendental idealism’s distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves.

Transcendental Idealism as the Solution to the Third Antinomy

In the section “Transcendental Idealism As The Key to Solving the Cosmological Dialectic” Kant makes a distinction between causality according to nature and causality according to freedom (see CPR A532/B560). Causality according to nature means, as we have already seen, that everything that happens in nature is the result of a preceding state upon which it follows according to a rule. The question of the Third Antinomy “is whether ... in regard to the very same effect that is determined by nature, freedom might not also take place, or is this entirely excluded through that inviolable rule? [i.e. the law of causality according to nature]” (CPR A536/B564). Commenting on this, Kant claims that “if appearances are things in themselves, then freedom cannot be saved” (ibid.). On the other hand, Kant goes on to say that

[i]f ... appearances do not count for any more than they are in fact, namely, not for things in themselves but only for mere representations connected in accordance with empirical laws, then they themselves must have grounds that are not appearances. Such an *intelligible cause*, however, will not be determined in its causality by appearances, even though its effects appear and so can be determined through other appearances (CPR A537/B565).

What Kant is suggesting here is that an effect in the empirical world “can ... be regarded as free in regard to its intelligible cause, and yet simultaneously, in regard to appearances, as their result according to the necessity of nature” (CPR A537/B565). In other words, Kant is suggesting that appearances can remain governed by natural causality while *at the same time* being freely caused intelligibly.

According to Guyer, to say that something can be both the effect of a natural cause on the level of appearance and an effect of a free cause on the level of intelligibility means that

[a]t the level of appearances events succeed one another smoothly in accordance with deterministic causal laws, but yet that the phenomenal world itself is also the expression of noumenally free choices, and would have been different if those noumenal choices had been different (Guyer 2006, 217).

The idea behind this solution is as follows: according to transcendental idealism the *a priori* forms through which we necessarily experience objects imply that we only experience objects as they appear to us in such forms. However,

since the forms of sensory representation and any limits inherent in those forms apply only to the appearances of things, not to things as they are in themselves, we are at least free to *think* or *conceive of* things as they are in themselves independently of those forms (Guyer 2006, 53).

As we saw above, Kant wants to resolve the Third Antinomy by showing that *both* the law of causality applies to objects universally *and* that freedom is possible. With transcendental idealism's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves, we are free to think of objects as they are in themselves independent of the forms governing their appearance. This means that transcendental idealism allows us to say that an object is both causally determined by nature insofar as it is an appearance *and* that "simultaneously in one and the same occurrence" (CPR A536/B564) it is caused by freedom in itself. As such, Kant resolves the conflict of the Third Antinomy and shows

that free causality and causality according to nature are, in a certain way, compatible with one another.

As Guyer notes, Kant's solution to the Third Antinomy shows that, with respect to stopping the infinite regress of the causal series, "a *single* act of uncaused causation outside of the temporal series would suffice" (Guyer 2006, 142). This could be an act of spontaneity on the part of God or of something similar. In other words, "the thesis [of the Third Antinomy] *might* be true without that being of any help to the cause of *human freedom*" (Guyer 2006, 142). This is not a significant worry, however, because

all Kant wants to prove at this points is the *possibility* of human freedom, not its *actuality* ... All he wants to do now is open up conceptual space for the idea of the freedom of action from determination by causal laws of nature, and his reasoning seems to be that if one case of such freedom is conceivable then other cases are at least conceivable (Guyer 2006, 142).

It is therefore only the *possibility* of human freedom that Kant illustrates in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. It is not until the *Groundwork* and the second *Critique* that Kant attempts to show that human beings are actually free. Kant's attempts to prove the actuality of freedom do not concern us, however. What is important for our purposes is a distinction that would make human freedom possible, according to transcendental idealism, and this is the distinction between the human being's empirical and intelligible character.

Empirical and Intelligible Character

In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that the distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves brings forth yet another distinction, i.e. the distinction “between a *world of sense* and the *world of understanding*” (G 4:451). Also in the *Groundwork*, Kant provides a definition of reason as “pure self-activity” and claims that reason shows “in what we call ‘ideas’ a spontaneity so pure that it thereby goes far beyond anything that sensibility can ever afford it” (G 4:452). What Kant refers to as an “idea” here is, as Guyer notes, “[n]ot any content of thought, as in Locke, but a representation of something unconditioned, such as the self, the world, or God, originating from pure reason” (Guyer 2006, 375). As unconditioned, ideas of this kind are generated by pure reason alone and not from sensibility of any kind. As the capacity to represent ideas apart from sensibility, reason is therefore apart and separate from the world of sense. Therefore, a purely rational being would be separate from the world of sense and part of the world of understanding or, as Kant alternatively puts it, the intellectual or *intelligible world* (see G 4:451).

In both the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that there is something about the human being that distinguishes it from the rest of nature. As Kant explains:

In the case of lifeless nature and nature having merely animal life, we find no ground for thinking of any faculty which is other than sensibly conditioned. Yet the human being, who is otherwise acquainted with the whole of nature solely through sense, knows himself also through pure apperception, and indeed in

actions and inner determinations which cannot be accounted at all among impressions of sense; he obviously is in one part phenomenon, but in another part, namely in regard to certain faculties, he is merely intelligible object, because the actions of this object cannot at all be ascribed to the receptivity of sensibility. We call these faculties understanding and reason; chiefly the latter is distinguished quite properly and pre-eminently from all empirically conditioned powers, since it considers its objects merely according to ideas and in accordance with them determines the understanding, which then makes an empirical use of its own concepts (even the pure ones) (CPR A546-7/B574-5).

After arguing that a purely rational being is part of the intelligible world, Kant therefore claims that the human being, as distinct from a purely rational being, finds “in himself a capacity by which he distinguished himself from all other things, even from himself insofar as he is affected by objects, and that is *reason*” (G 4:452). As a possessor of reason, human beings are also intelligible objects but *only insofar as* they possess reason. Given reason is capable of activity that is not conditioned by the sensible world and is therefore independent from it, possessing reason means human beings belong both to the *world of sense* as well as the *intelligible world* (see G 4:451), i.e. human beings are both empirical or phenomenal objects as well as intelligible or noumenal objects.

As belonging to these two worlds, the Kantian subject has a dual character, and this has significant consequences. Kant claims that

for a subject in the world of sense we would have first an **empirical character**, through which its actions, as appearances, would stand through and through in connection with other appearances in accordance with constant natural laws, from

which, as their conditions, they could be derived ... Yet second, [we] would also have to allow this subject an **intelligible character**, through which it is indeed the cause of those actions as appearances, but which does not stand under conditions of sensibility and is not itself appearance. The first one could call the character of such a thing in appearance, the second its character as a thing in itself (CPR A539/B567).

As is seen in this quotation, what is important about this dual character is that each has a specific kind of causality. According to Kant, because the human being may be considered as both an intelligible and a phenomenal object, “one can consider the **causality** of this being in two aspects, as **intelligible** in its **action** as a thing in itself, and as **sensible** in the **effects** of that action as an appearance in the world of sense” (CPR A538/B566).

As appearance, therefore, the human being is subject to the laws of nature and its actions are perfectly determined. The human being’s intelligible character, however, is not subject to such laws but is independent of them. Indeed, just as transcendental idealism showed that objects as they are in themselves might be different than how they appear, so are we free to think of the human being as not subject to the laws of nature insofar as it is a thing-in-itself, i.e. with respect to its intelligible character. In other words, because Kant’s solution to the Third Antinomy showed that it is possible to ascribe freedom to human beings as things-in-themselves, we are allowed to assert that human beings might be free insofar as they are things-in-themselves. Important to note is that this is a negative definition of freedom, i.e. it is freedom *from* causal determinism. Kant believes there is a sense in which the human being might be positively free,

however. In order to see this we must turn to a second way in which Kant uses the term “spontaneity”.

Spontaneity and Transcendental Freedom

As we saw above, Kant uses the term “spontaneity” to refer to reason’s ability to produce ideas that are not conditioned by sensibility. Robert Hanna distinguishes between two senses of the notion of spontaneity in Kant’s work; cognitive spontaneity and metaphysical spontaneity. Cognitive spontaneity is of the kind we have already dealt with, i.e. “a *structural creativity* of the mind with respect to its representations” (Hanna 2009). Metaphysical spontaneity, on the other hand, refers to “a mental cause that can sufficiently determine an effect in time while also lacking any temporally prior sufficient cause of itself” (ibid.). This second metaphysical sense of spontaneity is what is important for our purposes because it is in essence Kant’s conception of transcendental freedom. Before turning to transcendental freedom it is important to note that what these two senses of spontaneity share is the “unprecedented, creative character of the mind’s operations” (ibid.). As Robert Pippin notes, “it is clear that for Kant a spontaneous activity is always a self-causing activity, as, for example, in the case of the ‘unconditioned causality’ of freedom, also called the ‘causality of reason’” (Pippin 1987, 450).

Kant’s idea of transcendental freedom is “the faculty of beginning a state **from itself**, the causality of which does not in turn stand under another cause determining it in time in accordance with the law of nature” (CPR A533/B561). At the same time he calls this sense of freedom “spontaneity” (ibid.). Indeed, in Kant’s proof of the Third

Antinomy's thesis, free causality is defined as "an **absolute** causal **spontaneity** beginning **from itself**" (CPR A446/B474). As is evident from Pippin's description of metaphysical spontaneity as the causality of reason, transcendental human freedom is the ability of reason to be causal with respect to its actions, to spontaneously begin a causal series from itself, and this is Kant's positive conception of freedom.

In a telling passage that illustrates the link between the two kinds of spontaneity, Kant says the following:

Whether it is an object of mere sensibility ... or even of pure reason ... reason does not give in to those grounds which are empirically given, and it does not follow the order of things as they are presented in intuition, *but with complete spontaneity* it makes its own order *according to ideas*, to which it fits the empirical conditions and according to which it even declares actions to be necessary that yet **have not occurred** and perhaps will not occur, nevertheless presupposing of all such actions that reason could have causality in relation to them; for without that, it would not expect its ideas to have effects in experience (CPR A548/B576).

Reason, then, has the ability to spontaneously create ideas from itself. Some of these ideas represent actions as necessarily required by reason (an idea that will be returned to below when I turn to the categorical imperative) and, as Kant claims above, this presupposes "that reason *could* have causality in relation to them" (CPR A548/B576). That reason could have causality in relation to such actions is Kant's notion of transcendental freedom and amounts to the claim that reason can be practical in and of itself.

At the end of this chapter I discuss the problems with the claim that, on its own, reason can be the cause of action in the empirical world. First, however, we must turn to the *Groundwork* and the *Critique of Practical Reason* in order to gain a complete picture of the significance of the notion of practical reason in Kant's philosophy. Interestingly, not only are actions caused by reason alone free, they are also morally good actions.

Reason and the Nature of Duty

As we have seen, reason is part of the noumenal or intelligible world and to act freely is to have reason be the cause of action. Kant argues that human beings possess reason, and, insofar as the human being is a rational being, a human being can act freely by excluding everything that is empirical and governed by natural causality, namely all that is bodily, and that it can act on reason alone. The emphasis on reason as opposed to and at the expense of all that is natural, bodily and empirical is one of the most central elements of Kant's philosophy. While my focus is on Kant's moral philosophy and his conception of freedom, this opposition between reason and sensibility is present in Kant's epistemology as well.

In the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant claims that it is *a priori* cognitions in particular that concern themselves with "the investigations of our reason that we hold to be far more preeminent in their importance and sublime in their final aim than everything that the understanding can learn in the field of appearances" (CPR A3/B6). Kant distinguishes between two types of cognition: *a priori* cognition, which is "independent of all experience and even of all impressions of the senses" (CPR B2) and cognitions *a*

posteriori or “empirical ones, which have their sources ... in experience” (CPR B2). For Kant, “[n]ecessity and strict universality are ... secure indications of an *a priori* cognition” (CPR B4). By a “necessary cognition” Kant means a knowledge claim that asserts something must be thus and so and that it cannot be otherwise (see CPR B3). By “universal” Kant means “that no exception at all is allowed to be possible” (CPR B4). Kant favours *a priori* cognitions over *a posteriori* ones because he believes it is only *a priori* cognitions, with their properties of necessity and universality, that can be solutions to what he calls the “unavoidable” problems of “God, freedom and immortality” (CPR B7). This is because *a priori* cognitions are valid for all time, for everyone, and everywhere, while *a posteriori* cognitions, which have their sources in experience, are fleeting and changing.

Kant’s emphasis on reason and *a priori* cognitions returns in his moral philosophy. For example, according to Lewis White Beck the first two sections of Kant’s *Groundwork*

contain statements that remind the reader that the purpose of these sections is analytical and that their conclusions are put forth problematically; they give the structure of morality whether or not such thing is real. The principles are enunciated as those which must be true ‘if duty is not a vain delusion and a chimerical concept,’ and their conceptual correctness is independent of an answer to the question as to whether ‘true virtue can be found anywhere in the world’ (Beck 1960, 51-2, quoting G 4:445 and G 4:407 respectively).

Because Kant believes only *a priori* cognitions are capable of serving as knowledge of the things that are of preeminent importance, the nature of duty, then, if it is not a

chimera, must be necessary and universal, i.e. of such a nature that it holds for everyone, everywhere and for all time. Indeed, in the Preface to the *Groundwork* Kant explains that “a law, if it is to hold morally, that is, as a ground of an obligation, must carry with it absolute necessity” (G 4:389). Because of this, Kant claims “the ground of obligation here must not be sought in the nature of the human being or in the circumstances of the world in which he is placed, but a priori and simply in concepts of pure reason” (G 4:389). It is *a priori* cognitions and pure reason alone, therefore, that express what human beings are bound to do by duty.

As discussed above, human beings are rational beings insofar as they possess reason. Judgements made by reason alone, i.e. *a priori* judgements, carry with them necessity and universality. If duties are *a priori* cognitions, then human beings, insofar as they are rational, are individually bound to do what can be demanded of every rational being. Purely rational beings always act on reason and thus have a “holy will” (G 4:414), according to Kant. What this means is that purely rational beings never feel obligated to do anything, they simply act and whenever they act they do so according to reason alone. Human beings, however, are not purely rational and therefore do not always act on reason alone. Human beings belong to both the world of the understanding and the sensible world and, as such, they also act on their empirical nature. Since they are also empirical, human beings *do* feel obligated to do what reason requires, i.e. to attempt to always act on the requirements of reason, even though this is an ideal, which Kant acknowledges can never be attained.

Since human beings do feel obligated by the requirements of reason, Kant’s supreme principle of morality is a “categorical imperative”; it is an obligation or

imperative that applies to all human beings *categorically* insofar as they are rational.

According to the first formulation in the *Groundwork* (which has been dubbed the “formula of universal law”, see Guyer 2006, 191), the categorical imperative states that “*I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law*” (G 4:402). As such, it is the human being’s duty to do only what it is at the same time the duty of every rational being to do.

While the above is Kant’s definition of duty, what it means to perform a moral act, for Kant, is a different story. According to Kant, “nothing other than the *representation of the law in itself, which can of course occur only in a rational being*, insofar as it and not the hoped-for effect is the determining ground of the will, can constitute the preeminent good we call moral” (G 4:401). What this means is that an act is moral only if, first, it is performed “without regard for the effect expected from it” (G 4:402) and, second, that reason causes the action independently of any natural inclination.

Moral Action, Respect, and Practical Reason

According to Kant, “in the case of what is to be morally good it is not enough that it *conform* with the moral law but it must also be done *for the sake of the law*” (G 4:390). Kant sees a problem with calling an action moral that happens to be in conformity with what is required of all humanity but is nonetheless done for the wrong reasons, e.g. out of self-interest. Kant claims that doing an action *from* duty is exemplified when an action is done despite having inclinations to do the contrary. In the first section of the *Groundwork* Kant provides a number of examples of actions done for the sake of the law rather than in

conformity with it. One of the examples Kant presents is the case of suicide. Kant claims that

to preserve one's life is a duty, and besides everyone has an immediate inclination to do so. But on this account the often anxious care that most people take of it still has no inner worth and their maxim has no moral content. They look after their lives *in conformity with duty* but not *from duty*. On the other hand, if adversity and hopeless grief have quite taken away the taste for life; if an unfortunate man, strong of soul and more indignant about his fate than despondent or dejected, wishes for death and yet preserves his life without loving it, not from inclination or fear but from duty, then his maxim has moral content (G 4:397-8).

It is only when an action is done solely because it is the right thing to do that it has moral worth, for Kant. Even if an action is in conformity with what is required by reason (preserving one's life, for example), if the action is performed out of inclination, then it is not a moral act. Since preserving our life is something every human has the natural inclination to do, when it is done out of inclination it is not an action that has moral worth.

If moral action is action that is done solely because it is the right thing to do, and this is action that is often performed *despite* inclination to the contrary, something must outweigh the pull of inclination. Elaborating on this point, Kant claims "*duty is the necessity of an action from respect for the law*" (G 4:400). As stated, it is reason alone that dictates what every rational being is required to do for all time and everywhere, according to Kant. In addition to this, Kant claims that lawgiving reason forces upon human beings an "immediate respect" for the moral law (see G 4:403). It is only when

the law itself, i.e. what reason on its own dictates, *and* this respect for the law act as reasons for action themselves and nothing else that our actions can be called moral. For Kant,

an action from duty is to put aside entirely the influence of inclination and with it every object of the will; hence there is left for the will nothing that could determine it except objectively the *law* and subjectively *pure respect* for this practical law (G 4:400).

Accordingly, one performs a moral act when the motives for action that spring from our empirical being are put aside and reason on its own determines our action. As such, to act morally, i.e. to produce an act that has moral worth, is for reason alone to be practical.

As we saw above, to perform a free action is also for pure reason to be practical on its own and of itself.⁶ Adorno's main target in connection with the concept of the

⁶ What has been called Kant's "Reciprocity Thesis" refers to the fact that freedom and the moral law reciprocally imply each other. In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that "freedom and the will's own lawgiving are both autonomy and hence reciprocal concepts" (G 4:450). What this means is that arguing for the reality of one involves arguing for the reality of the other. As Allison states, the significance of this claim on Kant's part "stems from the fact that it entails that freedom of the will (transcendental freedom) is not only a necessary but also a sufficient condition of the moral law" (Allison 1990, 201). Indeed, as we have seen, both carrying out free actions and carrying out moral actions involves the possibility of pure reason being practical of itself and on its

addendum is Kant's conception of the will, which, in the *Groundwork*, Kant identifies with practical reason.⁷ This is because there are problems with the claim that pure reason

own, and this is what Kant attempts to prove when he argues for the reality of freedom and the moral law. If free action and moral action are equivalent, however, i.e. if acting out of pure reason is always to at the same time perform a free as well as a moral action, this leads to a problematic position that Carl Leonard Reinhold was the first to point out.

As Paul Guyer nicely puts it, "if our freedom implies that we not merely should but *do* act in accordance with the moral law, then the only explanation for our immoral acts is that in performing them we were not really free after all" (Guyer 2006, 219). The equivalence of free and moral action, therefore, leads to the problem that evil action is not chosen freely, and therefore that individuals cannot be responsible for evil action. This is a position that Kant attempts to revise in *Religion Within the Boundaries of Mere Reason* and is too remote for my purposes here. Nevertheless, the reciprocity thesis shows how free action and moral action are equated in Kant's philosophy, and how both of them amount to pure reason becoming practical.

⁷ Kant's conception of the will is notoriously confusing. According to Lewis White Beck, there are two conceptions of will operative in Kant's works and they are often not clearly distinguished (see Beck 1960, 176-7). It is not until the *Metaphysics of Moral* that Kant makes a distinction between the two types of will (see Allison 1990, 130), which means Kant's use of the concept before this text is ambiguous to say the

least. In general, the will is a “faculty of volition” (Allison 1990, 129) that has freedom as its quality. The distinction between the two types of will concerns what Allison calls the “legislative” function of this faculty, *Wille*, and the “executive” function, *Willkür*. The general faculty of volition that has these two functions is also referred to as *Wille* according to Allison, meaning *Wille* “has both a broad sense in which it connotes the faculty of volition as a whole and a narrow sense in which it connotes one function of that faculty” (Allison 1990, 129). According to Allison, *Wille* in the narrow sense is always equated with practical reason (ibid., 130). In this sense, “*Wille* is the source of the laws that confront the human *Willkür*” (ibid., 130). *Willkür* itself is the will “that can be said to act, that is, to decide, choose, and even wish under the governance of *Wille*” (ibid., 130) and as such, *Willkür* is “the faculty of the power of choice” (ibid., 130).

Beyond having different meanings, there is good reason that Kant introduces this distinction between wills. As Allison notes,

Kant’s main motivation for introducing this distinction into his account of rational agency is to clarify his conception of the will as *self-determining* and, ultimately, as autonomous. In the *Groundwork*, Kant not only defines the will as practical reason, he also speaks of reason as determining (or failing to determine) the will. This locution, which is certainly not unique to Kant, presupposes a certain duality of function within the will, and the *Wille-Willkür* distinction provides just what is required in order to articulate with duality within unity. Thus it is *Wille* in the narrow sense that provides the norm and *Willkür* that chooses in light of this

norm. Similarly, this distinction allows us to speak of the will as giving the law to, or even as being the law for, itself, since this is just a matter of *Wille* giving the law to, or being the law for, *Willkür*. Strictly speaking, then, it is only *Wille* in the broad sense that has the property of autonomy, since it is only *Wille* in this sense that can be characterized as a law to itself (ibid., 130-1).

According to White Beck, however, what this means is that because “[t]he law is a product of the freedom of *Wille* as pure practical reason, not of *Willkür* ... [w]e cannot say that the actions of *Wille* are free, because *Wille* does not act” (Beck 1960, 179-180). Indeed, after assessing some dissimilarities between Kant’s published and unpublished writings on the *Wille/Willkür* distinction, Allison concludes that

[i]t is only *Wille* in the broad sense (the whole faculty of volition) that can be spoken of as autonomous, since *Wille* in the narrow sense (the legislative faculty) is not a law to itself but to *Willkür*. Given this, the most reasonable course seems to be to accept at face value the claim in the published text that *Wille* (in the narrow sense) can be described as neither free nor unfree. Alternatively, if we wish to attribute a sense of freedom to *Wille*, it can consist only in the negative property of not being subject to necessitation (Allison 1990, 132).

As we shall see, Adorno understands Kant’s concept of the will as identical with practical reason, and given that Adorno focuses on Kant’s *Groundwork* and second *Critique*, i.e. texts that do not clearly distinguish between two types of will, one cannot

blame him for doing so. If Kant does make a distinction, however, it is possible that one could respond to Adorno's worries by making reference to this distinction.

According to John Ladd, however, the two different conceptions match up with Kant's rational/empirical dichotomy (see Ladd 1999, xxix). Ladd agrees with Beck and Allison that *der Wille* "is used more specifically by Kant to stand for *will* when it functions as the source of a command or law" (ibid., xxix), i.e. as "a legislating will" and "the source of law, moral as well as legal" (ibid., xxix). *Die Willkür*, on the other hand, "is the faculty of deciding, for example, to act. It may also be called 'choice' or 'arbitrary preference', for it may select between alternatives and reflects the personal desires of the individual subject" (ibid., xxx). This kind of will is "individualistic and arbitrary" because "what one person chooses often differs from and may even be incompatible with what another person chooses" (ibid., xxx). This second, "empirical" conception of the will "is an empirical property of human beings as well as animals" (ibid., xxx).

To anticipate what is to come, Adorno argues that reason cannot be practical on its own and that an empirical element is needed in order for action to be possible. If Kant's position is that there is in fact an empirical "part" (*Willkür*) of the will in general (*Wille* in the broad sense), then perhaps Kant can respond to Adorno's concerns. If, however, the distinction between the empirical will and the rational/intelligible will faces problems similar to the problem of the connection between the intelligible and empirical world that I discuss below, then perhaps Adorno's worries still hold despite the fact that Kant distinguishes between an empirical and a rational will. In any event, these issues

can be practical, and Kant himself recognized some of these. Before turning to why Adorno rejects the possibility that pure reason can be practical, therefore, it is important to treat the problems with Kant's position and which motivate Adorno to reject Kant's characterization of free and moral action.

The Problem of Intelligible Freedom

According to Henry Allison, there is consensus among Kant critics that applying transcendental idealism's distinction between appearances and things-in-themselves to the problem of freedom leads to a dilemma from which there is no ready escape. Either freedom is located in some timeless noumenal realm, in which case it may be reconciled with the causality of nature, but only at the cost of making the concept both virtually unintelligible and irrelevant to the understanding of human agency, or, alternatively, freedom is thought to make a difference in the world, in which case both the notion of its timeless, noumenal status and the unrestricted scope within nature of the causal principle must be abandoned (Allison 1990, 2).

deserve extended discussion in order to be treated adequately. I hope to be able to investigate these issues in a future project.

Indeed, according to transcendental idealism, we can only have knowledge of objects insofar as they appear to us, i.e. only as they are understood through the pure forms of intuition that are the conditions for the possibility of experience in the first place. This means that knowledge of objects as they are in themselves is impossible. Therefore, to say that human freedom can only be intelligible freedom would mean that freedom is incomprehensible and cannot be known. At the same time, to say that something not governed by the laws of nature, that something atemporal and non-spatial is supposed to make a difference in a world that *is* spatial, temporal and governed by the laws of cause and effect is perplexing to say the least.

Remarking on his solution to the Third Antinomy, in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant claims that it is possible to say that natural determination and freedom are compatible according to transcendental idealism because

understanding and reason ... have two different legislations on one and the same territory of experience, without either being detrimental to the other. For just as little as the concept of nature influences legislation through the concept of freedom does the latter disturb the legislation of nature. – The possibility of at least conceiving without contradiction the coexistence of the two legislations and the faculties pertaining to them in one and the same subject was proved by the Critique of Pure Reason, when it annihilated the objections to this by exposing the dialectical illusion in them (CJ 62, emphasis added).

For Kant, making determinism and freedom compatible meant eliminating the threat that the realm of nature and complete determinism pose to freedom. This also means, however, that realizing freedom in the natural world becomes problematic. As Kant

acknowledges, to say “the law of [nature] does not affect [freedom]” means that “*each is independent of the other, and can take place without being disturbed by the other*” (CPR A557/B585). Therefore, although Kant showed the illusion in the contradiction of nature and freedom, he did so at the cost of making them both irrelevant to each other and making the interaction between the two problematic.

Paul Guyer nicely summarizes this problem when he claims that it looks as if Kant has avoided a conflict between nature and freedom, between science and morality, only by making them irrelevant to each other, or by dividing our own characters and placing us in two parallel universes: in one realm where our actions are as fully determined by antecedent events and deterministic laws as anything else in nature is, but in another, in some sense underlying realm where our choices are completely free even though they somehow manifest themselves in appearance as if they had been seamlessly caused by antecedent events (Guyer 2006, 3).

Kant himself recognized this problem that results from his solution to the Third Antinomy because in the *Critique of Pure Judgment* he claims his goal in the book is to bridge “[the] incalculable gulf fixed between the domain of the concept of nature, as the sensible, and the domain of the concept of freedom, as the supersensible” (CJ 5:175-6). Therefore, as Kant was aware, if freedom is to mean anything at all and morality is possible,

the concept of freedom should make the end that is imposed by its laws real in the sensible world; and nature must consequently also be able to be conceived in such a way that the lawfulness of its form is at least in agreement with the possibility of

the ends that are to be realized in it in accordance with the laws of freedom. –
 Thus there must still be a ground of the **unity** of the supersensible that grounds nature with that which the concept of freedom contains practically, the concept of which ... makes possible the transition from the manner of thinking in accordance with the principles of the one to that in accordance with the principles of the other (CJ 5:176).

Indeed, the *Critique of Pure Judgment* as a whole is meant to establish the unity of the two realms that Kant so drastically separated in his earlier works. This is something that Kant only later realized must be proven in addition to the claim that pure reason can be practical.

As stated above, there are two ways in which to read Kant's transcendental idealism: in such a way that appearances and things-in-themselves refer to two different kinds of objects and two separate worlds, or in such a way that these are two aspects or two ways in which to consider the same object. According to the former reading, we are in a situation similar to that of Descartes' substance dualism where two entirely separate kinds of objects that are subject to separate kinds of laws are suppose to interact. On the other hand, according to the aspect reading the situation is similar. As Henry Allison admits, this reading

leaves us with the problem of explaining the attribution of a double character, in Kant's terms, an empirical and an intelligible character, to a single subject (a rational agent). This is a problem because the two characters seem to be incompatible since the former involves subjection to causal determination (the

‘causality of nature’) and the latter an independence of all such determination (Allison 1990, 5).

Accordingly, neither reading of Kant’s transcendental idealism is able to solve the problem of the interaction between these two objects, worlds, or aspects. What is common to both readings is that different kinds of laws govern each distinct object or each aspect. Because of this it is unclear how these worlds can be compatible with one another regardless of whether they are aspects of one object or two distinct objects altogether, even though this compatibility takes different forms depending on which interpretation of the doctrine one adopts.

Not only did Kant attempt to solve this problem in the third *Critique*, but subsequent writers in the idealist tradition, among whom Hegel and Schiller, attempted to solve this problem as well. Adorno attempts to solve this problem in a different fashion, however, because he does not subscribe to the radical dualism of Descartes and Kant and thus rejects the possibility of pure reason becoming practical in and of itself. On the contrary, Adorno believes that mind and body are intimately connected. In the next chapter I focus exclusively on Adorno’s response to Kant’s idea of pure practical reason when I turn to the focus of this thesis, a discussion of Adorno’s concept of the “addendum”.

CHAPTER III

THE ADDENDUM

Introduction

In the preceding chapter my goal was to explain the Kantian terminology with which Adorno engages when explaining his concept of the addendum, as well as to explain the significance of the position that the addendum is primarily a response to, namely the position that reason can be practical on its own. In this chapter I turn to the focus of this thesis: a discussion of the concept of the addendum itself. I begin with a discussion of Adorno's critique of the idealist equation of freedom and reason, i.e. his critique of the position that reason or the mind is capable of effecting action on its own, and then move on to discuss his claim that there is nonetheless a psychic component that plays an important role in action. However, because a psychic component is necessary but not sufficient for action, something physical is needed and this is the addendum.

The addendum is a physical impulse required for action to take place, as I explain by making reference to Adorno's discussion of the "Buridan ass" thought experiment and his discussion of what he calls the "problem of Hamlet" (HF 231). In this chapter I also discuss how the addendum is very much influenced by Freud's understanding of instinct. Not only this, but Adorno agrees with Freud that consciousness has a genesis in instinct and that this means that mind and body remain intimately connected. Both instinct for Freud and the addendum for Adorno are neither solely somatic nor solely mental, but are "frontier" concepts (see Freud 1989, 566) that do not nicely fit into either the body or the

mind category. Indeed, Adorno claims the addendum is an image of a reconciliation of mind and nature, and it is with a discussion of this claim that I end the chapter.

Adorno's Critique of the Equation of Freedom and Reason

One of the ideas Adorno criticizes throughout his reflections on freedom, an idea connected to his critique of internal freedom and the monadological theory of subjectivity, is “the idealist equation of reason and freedom” (HF 183). This is the idea that was the primary focus of the last chapter: the idea that pure reason can be practical, that consciousness can effect action on its own. This is the idea to which the addendum is in large part a response.

At the beginning of the section on “The Addendum”, Adorno claims that a physical impulse or jolt is required for action of any kind to take place, but in “traditional philosophy” this impulse is “interpreted as nothing but consciousness” (ND 227). As we saw in the introduction, Cartesian consciousness “is supposed to intervene as if the intervention were somehow conceivable to the pure mind” and this amounts to the claim that “the subject’s reflection alone is able, if not to break through natural causality, at least to change its direction by adding other motivational chains” (ND 227). As we saw in the previous chapter, Kant thought that reason was required to be a cause of action on its own if humans are capable of producing free and moral actions. That Adorno claims an impulse or jolt is required in order for us to act means that he opposes this idea.

Adorno phrases his critique of the equation of freedom and reason as follows:

Consciousness, rational insight, is not simply the same as a free act. We cannot flatly equate it with the will. Yet this precisely is what happens in Kant's thinking. To him, the will is the epitome of freedom, the 'power' to act freely, the unifying characteristic of all acts conceived as free. Of the categories which 'in the field of the supersensory' are 'necessarily connected' with the 'determining ground of the pure will,' he teaches 'that they always refer only to intelligent beings, and even in these only to the relation of reason to the will, and this always only to practice.' It is through the will, he says, that reason creates its reality, untrammelled by the material, whatever its kind (ND 227).

Since Kant equated the will with practical reason, free action consisted in reason creating its reality without regard for the nature of the empirical world in which such action must nevertheless materialize. After citing the above passage, Adorno cites two of Kant's definitions of the will. In the *Groundwork*, Kant claims that "[t]he will is thought as a capacity to determine itself to acting in conformity with the *representation of certain laws*. And such a capacity can be found only in rational beings" (G 4:427). Adorno does not quote the second sentence, but it is important because it emphasizes how only *rational* beings can determine themselves to act in conformity with the representation of certain laws. While Adorno does not quote this second sentence, he does add a footnote which states that "[t]he 'representation of certain laws' is tantamount to the concept of pure reason – defined by Kant, after all, as 'the faculty of deriving cognition from principles'" (ND 227, trans. mod.). As with the second sentence of the above quotation, this footnote signals the identification of reason and the will for Kant. Even though he recognized the problem of the connection between the empirical and intelligible worlds,

Kant nonetheless believed that pure reason could be practical, and that it must be if freedom and morality are not illusions.

Reacting to Kant's equation of the will and reason, Adorno says "there may be a grain of truth in this equation of the will with consciousness, and it would be a mistake to deny it in the interests of a purely voluntaristic theory of spontaneity" (HF 230).

Although he rejects the identification of the will and reason, at the same time Adorno does not want to claim that acts of will are purely voluntaristic, reactionary and devoid of mental activity. One of the reasons why Adorno wants to avoid the opposite extreme is because in a theory that "strikes out reason in the passage to the act, the act is delivered to the automatism of dominion ... We have been taught this lesson by Hitler's Reich" (ND 229). In other words, because it was questionable just how much the Nazis were responsible for their actions while under the control of Hitler, Adorno does not want to call the acts of such automatons "acts of will". Indeed, to unquestioningly act under the control of another is to be unaware of what one is doing, to act without reflecting upon or "knowing" what one is doing. Therefore, Adorno believes that there must be a psychic component to action because only action of which an individual is aware him or herself can be called an act of will. In other words, an individual must know what he or she is doing in order for his or her action to be called an act of will, and for this reason consciousness must be an element of action.

Since Adorno believes action involves a certain kind of self-awareness, he claims that "if we wish to use the concept of the will, we cannot dispense with the concept of consciousness" (HF 230). He gives two additional reasons for this. First, he claims that "[u]nconscious action, an action in which consciousness does not intervene, of the sort

we find on the part of the dying, or very sick people or the mentally disabled, is purely a matter of reflexes. It cannot be distinguished from other natural processes” (HF 230). As such, Adorno is not praising purely impulsive action when he insists on there being a necessarily impulsive element to action. Acts of will, acts that are not simply reflexes, are acts, therefore, that *do* involve the mind to some degree.

The third reason why Adorno believes consciousness is a necessary part of acts of will is because

[t]he self-experience of the moment of freedom depends on consciousness; the subject knows itself to be free only insofar as its action strikes it as identical with it, and that is the case in conscious actions only. In those alone can subjectivity laboriously, ephemerally raise its head (ND 227).

Action that *can* be distinguished from reflexes, action that *is* voluntary and is under the control of a subject, is action that involves consciousness, reason or the mind. This does not mean, as it did for Kant, that this kind of mental activity is *sufficient* for action. What is required for action is the mind, on the one hand, and on the other “the addendum, the bodily impulse that cannot be reduced to reason” (HF 239, trans. mod.). Interestingly, therefore, Adorno believes it is not by excluding all that is empirical that our action becomes rational and free. What on Kantian terms would be heteronomous, i.e. an impulse, a part of nature and therefore wrapped up in the chain of cause and effect and a threat to freedom, is in fact *required* for free action.

So far we have seen why Adorno believes there must be a psychic component to willed action. As just stated, however, he believes that this psychic component is not sufficient for action. For Adorno, “the will that has been reduced to pure practical reason

is an abstraction. The addendum is the name for that which was eliminated in this abstraction; without it, there would be no real will at all” (ND 229). Indeed, Adorno claims that if the abstraction of pure reason goes too far and “if the motor form of reaction were liquidated altogether, if the hand no longer twitched, there would be no will” (ND 230). Accordingly, Adorno believes that a material, motor form of reaction or impulse is required for action to occur. In order to better understand this element of action, the element that the addendum is primarily intended to capture,⁸ I turn to Adorno’s discussion of the “Buridan ass” thought experiment and what he dubs “the problem of Hamlet” (HF 231).

Buridan’s Ass, Hamlet and the Somatic Impulse

The section on “The Addendum” (ND 226-230) follows a section entitled “Experimenta Crucis” (ND 223-226). In this section Adorno primarily discusses a

⁸ As we have just seen, Adorno often speaks as if the addendum is an impulse alone. He does this because he wishes to highlight the physical element of action. In fact, however, the addendum refers to the fact that there is both a physical and a mental element involved in action. In the following, I occasionally do the same as Adorno and refer to the addendum as solely an impulse but it should be kept in mind that the addendum is an idea that captures how both of these elements are required for action.

number of Kant's examples whereby he hoped to prove the existence of the moral law (the example of the man threatened with the gallows and the example of the card sharp). In addition to these, however, Adorno discusses the "Buridan ass" thought experiment and Kant's example of rising from a chair (see ND 223) which are meant "[t]o decide cogently, empirically, so to speak, whether the will is free" (ND 223). Remarking on both of these examples, Adorno claims that "by their nature, by the way they are designed, these thought experiments ... strive to reduce the empirical context to the point where the example becomes incompatible with reality" (HF 222).

In Adorno's interpretation of the "Buridan ass" thought experiment, an ass is situated at an equal distance from two identical bundles of hay and "[t]he question of which one it would turn to, which one it would eat, or eat first, [is] supposed to be the proof of its freedom to choose" (HF 222). Adorno claims that this thought experiment begs the question because "[p]ure situations a la Buridan are not apt to occur where they are not devised or brought about in order to demonstrate freedom" (ND 223-4). For Adorno, "when you think of situations involving living people, they always turn out to be different" (HF 222).

The "Buridan ass" experiment is pure, for Adorno, in the sense that the empirical aspects of the example that would make it a realistic one are missing. For example, that an ass would find itself an exactly equal distance away from two exactly similar bundles of hay is virtually impossible. Adorno's critique of this experiment is therefore centred on the fact that by introducing empirical elements, you "deprive the example of its cogency" (HF 222). Since external matters are stripped from the thought experiment, Adorno believes the example already presupposes that "the question of freedom in all these

experiments is supposed to be an internal matter” (HF 223), something that has nothing to do with external, empirical reality. As we have already seen with his critique of the monadological subject, this is an idea to which Adorno is very much opposed.

Accordingly, Adorno rejects the idea that such experiments can accomplish what they are designed to, i.e. decide whether or not the will is free.

What the “Buridan ass” thought experiment in particular does accomplish, for Adorno, is to “bring us face to face with” the idea of the addendum. Adorno believes the “memory” of this moment is preserved in the experiment (see HF 228-9). He claims this experiment illustrates that

[t]he decisions of the human subject do not simply glide along the surface of the chain of cause and effect. When we speak of acts of will, we experience a sort of jolt. The most basic example of this, the story of Buridan’s ass, does in fact give us an inkling of this when we consider that even the ass, stupid though it may be, still has to exert itself, to make a gesture of some sort, to do something or other that goes beyond the thought processes or non-thought-processes of its pathetic brain. That is to say, it experiences some kind of impulse, I would almost say a physical impulse, a somatic impulse that goes beyond the pure intellectualization of what is supposed ... alone to constitute the will (HF 228).

The first point Adorno wishes to make with the idea of the addendum is that, as he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*, “[t]he subject’s decisions do not *roll off* in a causal chain; what occurs is a jolt [*Ruck*]” (ND 226). In other words, Adorno is stating that doing anything at all, even making “a gesture of some sort” (see HF 228), involves more than the thought processes that are nonetheless necessarily involved in acting. Whether it

be an ass or a human being, acting does not simply mean having the relevant beliefs, desires, or other mental states or thought processes. Such mental states may be necessary but cannot by themselves cause a material effect in the world. For Adorno, it is impossible for a purely mental cause to unproblematically and smoothly lead to a material effect. Acting is abrupt, it requires a jolt; a physical, somatic impulse; the addendum.

Adorno makes use of a second example to illustrate this point. At various places in his writings, he refers to what he dubs “the problem of Hamlet” (HF 231). In the play, Hamlet is informed by his father’s ghost that he was murdered by Claudius, Hamlet’s uncle. After hearing this, Hamlet wants to kill Claudius. Despite the fact that Hamlet believes that he ought to avenge his father’s murder and indeed desires to do so, when presented with the opportunity Hamlet is incapable of performing the action.⁹ Adorno

⁹ See 3.3.72-98. Also, see 3.1.83-8 where, in his most famous soliloquy, Hamlet echoes some of the claims Adorno is making and states: “Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,/And thus the native hue of resolution/Is sicklied o’er with the pale cast of thought,/ And enterprises of great pitch and moment/ With this regard their currents turn awry/ And lost the name of action”. According to Phillip Edwards, this is where “for the first time in the soliloquy, Hamlet turns, if indirectly, to the question of killing Claudius” and interprets Hamlet’s predicament as follows: “Thinking too much about the rights and wrongs of suicide stultifies the impulse to do away with oneself: thinking too much about rights and wrongs

claims that the addendum makes an appearance in the play because what is needed in order for Hamlet to carry out the action of killing Claudius is “a sudden ... impulse” (HF 234).¹⁰

According to Adorno, the actions Hamlet performs at the point in the play where he finally kills Claudius seem unconnected to “the complex, rational reflections” that have taken place up to that point in the play (see HF 234), i.e. Hamlet’s soliloquies. In other words, Hamlet’s actions and his mental states do not “match up” in the way they would if he were capable of being pushed to act by reason alone. Indeed, Adorno is claiming that if Hamlet were capable of so acting, he would have killed Claudius the first moment he was given the opportunity or at least much sooner than when he does in the play. What this example is therefore supposed to suggest, for Adorno, is that something beyond mere thoughts is needed in order for Hamlet to ultimately perform an action he knows he ought to do. What is needed is the addendum, the impulse or jolt that is necessary in order for action of any kind to occur.

Adorno claims that Hamlet appeared “at the outset of the self-emancipating modern subject’s self reflection” (ND 228). As we saw in the introduction, Adorno believes that around the time of Descartes and Shakespeare a gulf opened up between the inner world of consciousness and the outer natural world that came as a shock in contrast

stultifies *all* action including the one he’s supposed to be engaged in” (Shakespeare 2003, 159).

¹⁰ See 5.2.300-305 for when Hamlet finally performs the action.

to the worldview of the Middle Ages where the subject saw itself as part of the world (see HF 232). As Adorno says:

At the same time as the Cartesian doctrine of two substances ratified the dichotomy of subject and object, literature for the first time portrayed praxis as a dubious undertaking on account of its tension with reflection (Adorno 2005, 259).

Adorno claims that Hamlet is one of the first historical examples of a reflective person (see HF 231) and that in the play “we find the divergence of insight and action paradigmatically laid down” (ND 228). This divergence of insight and action that Hamlet experienced is revealed in Hamlet’s belief that he ought to kill Claudius and his inability to do so. As we shall see, Adorno believes that the trenchant separation of mind and world is illusory. However, once the gulf is created and the capacity for self-reflection allows individuals to withdraw from the world, the problem of how to act, how to move from reason to reality, the problem of how the mind is supposed to intervene in the chain of causality, presents itself.

What both the “Buridan ass” experiment and the example of Hamlet show, then, is that pure intellect on its own, i.e. the will/practical reason according to Kant, is not sufficient in order to act. A physical impulse or jolt is required in order for action to take place. This is the addendum, that which must be added to pure reason. At the same time, however, the addendum is not only material or physical. Adorno’s position is not simply that Kant was wrong to claim that only one side of the mind/matter dichotomy was sufficient for action and that both sides are needed, i.e. that both a psychic and a bodily element are needed, but that this dichotomy is misguided to begin with.

Indeed, Adorno claims that the addendum is an impulse, but that “[t]he impulse, intramental and somatic in one, drives beyond the conscious sphere to which it belongs just the same” (ND 228-9). The addendum is something *both* physical and mental and it is only because mind and matter are not radically separated that uniquely human action is possible to begin with. Remarking on the addendum’s nature as both somatic and mental, Adorno claims that “the impulse of which I have been speaking is the same as the will ... its existence is the strongest and most immediate proof that there is such a thing as freedom” (HF 235). The will is no longer practical reason, it is both somatic and mental and only in virtue of this fact is free and moral action possible.

Adorno is conscious of the fact that he is attempting to discuss the nature of willed or free action in an historical period in which the dualism of intramental and extramental, mind and matter, subject and object has been “thoroughly consolidated” (ND 228). In our historical period, “[t]he addendum has an aspect which under rationalistic rules is irrational” (ND 228) and this is its impulsive nature. In an age where the dualism of mind and body is thoroughly consolidated, the addendum, as an impulse, “appears as downright otherness” (ND 229). The addendum is an “addition”, an irrational addition, only to philosophical reflection that cannot escape thinking in terms of the mind/matter dualism so commonplace since the seventeenth century and thinks of the will as identical with pure practical reason. As stated, however, in reality the addendum is not solely impulse, nor is it solely psychic. It is both “intramental and somatic in one”,

both in the realm of causality yet part of the sphere of consciousness, and in this sense “it undercuts the Cartesian dualism of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*” (ND 228).¹¹

As mentioned, in claiming that the addendum is neither somatic nor mental but both, Adorno is signaling to the fact that he does not subscribe to the drastic and

¹¹ Since Adorno does not subscribe to a clear distinction between what is psychic and what is somatic, it is difficult to determine exactly what Adorno means when he says the addendum is *both* somatic and psychic. It is not simply that the addendum is both psyche and soma coming together because for Adorno these two things, psyche and soma, are not separate at all. Accordingly, when Adorno says that a psychic element is involved in action, it is not what we think of as consciousness or reason. As we shall in the next section of this chapter, Adorno believes that consciousness has a genesis in instinct and therefore that what is psychic is also somatic. What this means is that it is difficult to separate out the psychic from the somatic, i.e. that impulsive actions have a conscious element and that consciousness always has an impulsive element. At the same time, however, the psychic component of the addendum is not the same as consciousness itself. The way in which Adorno conceives of the relationship between the psychic component of the addendum and consciousness itself in particular is unclear. I do not wish to speculate on the nature of such a relationship here. This is a problem with interpreting Adorno’s position and it should be kept in mind throughout the remainder of this thesis.

atemporal dichotomy of mind and body. On the contrary, Adorno believes that consciousness has its genesis in instinct and he takes this as further evidence that mind and body are intimately connected. Adorno's understanding of the genesis of consciousness is highly influenced by Freud. Not only this, but the addendum shares qualities with Freud's understanding of instinct. Because of this, it is necessary to briefly discuss Freud's theory of instinct as well as his understanding of the genesis of consciousness in order to understand the way in which they are important for an understanding of Adorno's concept of the addendum.

Freud, Instinct and the Genesis of Consciousness

Freud's most general treatment of instinct is contained in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes."¹² In this article Freud admits that the concept of drive or instinct (*Trieb*) is

¹² From the essay "On Narcissism", to *Beyond the Pleasure Principle, The Ego and the Id* and *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud's theory of instinct went through considerable development. As Whitebook notes, the "different versions" of Freud's theory of instinct have "varying content" (PU 104-5) and the variation mainly has to do with the nature of and connection between the "two opposed terms" they nonetheless "always contained" (PU 105). In "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" Freud distinguishes between self-preservative or ego instincts and sexual instincts and later distinguished between the life and death drives. As Freud states, "[o]ur views have from the very first

one he can only describe obscurely. To the extent that instincts are capable of being described, Freud understands them in terms of stimuli. A stimulus is something applied to living tissue or a nervous substance (see Freud 1989, 564) from the outside, which triggers a reflex action directed back toward the outside. This reflex action is aimed at withdrawing “the stimulated substance from the influence of the stimulus” (ibid., 564). Instincts in particular refer to stimuli “applied to the mind” (ibid., 564) and, furthermore, “an instinctual stimulus does not arise from the external world but from within the organism itself” (ibid., 564). In addition to this, rather than being momentary like a stimulus from the external world, an instinctual stimulus is constant such that Freud claims “[a] better term for an instinctual stimulus is a ‘need’” (ibid., 565). Doing away with a need or instinct is to satisfy an instinct and this can only be attained, says Freud, “by an appropriate (‘adequate’) alteration of the internal source of stimulation” (ibid., 565).

In general, therefore, an instinct is a constant, internal stimulus, which an organism wishes to satisfy in order to be in a state that is in the absence of excitation.

been *dualistic*, and to-day they are even more definitely dualistic than before, now that we describe the opposition as being, not between ego-instincts and sexual instincts but between life instincts and death instincts” (as quoted in PU 286, note 60). My concern is not with the varying content of Freud’s theory of instinct, but with the way in which Freud thinks of instinct in general, and which Freud presents most clearly in “Instincts and Their Vicissitudes”.

Freud assigns to the nervous system in general the purpose, function, or task of “mastering stimuli”, i.e. of getting rid of them by reducing them to the lowest possible level, or, if possible, maintaining itself in an altogether unstimulated position (see *ibid.*, 565). As opposed to external stimuli that can be dealt with by withdrawing from them, [i]nstantial stimuli, which originate from within the organism, cannot be dealt with by this mechanism. Thus they make far higher demands on the nervous system and cause it to undertake involved and interconnected activities by which the external world is so changed as to afford satisfaction to the internal source of stimulation (*ibid.*, 565-6).

For this reason, Freud claims that “instincts and not external stimuli are the true motive forces behind the advances that have led the nervous system, with its unlimited capacities, to its high level of development” (*ibid.*, 566).

For Freud, reason, the ego, and self-consciousness, the highly developed capacities of the nervous system, are capacities that have grown out of the instincts. He argues that these capacities have developed; they have not existed as qualities of human nature since the beginning of time, but have evolved in order to satisfy our various needs and desires. What this means is that one cannot claim that mind and matter are separated or are different substances entirely, as Descartes thought. On the contrary, mind and matter are intimately related while at the same time being distinct from one another. Indeed, Freud believes that it is the nature of instinct that best illustrates this.

According to Freud,

an ‘instinct’ appears to us as a concept on the frontier between the mental and the somatic, as the psychical representative of the stimuli originating from within the

organism and reaching the mind, as a measure of the demand made upon the mind for work in consequence of its *connection* with the body (Freud 1989, 566, emphasis added).

As the “psychical representative” of what is for Freud something physical, i.e. the stimuli internal to an organism, instincts illustrate that mind and body are not separate categories. Internal, biological stimuli make demands upon the mind, and the mind goes to great lengths to satisfy such stimuli. Accordingly, mind and body are in communication with one another and biological changes affect the mind, and mental changes affect the body. Therefore, instinct is a concept that captures something that is not solely mental, nor solely somatic, but something both somatic and mental at the same time. As a “frontier” concept (*ibid.*), instinct reveals that the line between the mind/body dichotomy is blurry and the trenchant distinction between the two categories cannot be stubbornly maintained as Descartes and Kant do.

According to Joel Whitebook, Adorno “turns to psychoanalysis, with its genetic approach, to help accomplish this task [of making sense of practice] and make up for the radical deficiency that necessarily results from the ‘layout of [Kant’s] system’” (Whitebook 2004, 66). The genetic approach of psychoanalysis is, as explained above, Freud’s assertion that the more complex cognitive functions of human beings *develop* as a result of the need to satisfy our instincts. Adorno adopts this approach and believes that the ego, reason, and consciousness are not atemporal givens, i.e. capacities or faculties that human beings have had for all time. On the contrary, Adorno claims that the ego “is not something immediate” but rather it “has arisen; to speak in psychoanalytic terms: it has branched off from the diffuse energy of the libido” (ND 271).

As we saw in the previous chapter, Kant opposed reason to impulse and instinct, i.e. the bodily, material human being, and posited these two categories as atemporally separated. By contrast, Adorno believes that “that which originally [ursprünglich] was reflex has a tendency to make itself independent, compared to this mere reflex” (HF 237, trans. mod.). For Adorno, the ego is not de facto alien from impulse and instinct, the ego itself is libidinous energy that has split off (HF 237).

Referring to the genetic fallacy, Adorno claims that one must free oneself “completely and utterly from the idea that everything that has ever existed is able to preserve itself in a form identical with what it once was” (HF 236). Adorno claims “it is possible ... for something age-old to survive and nevertheless to become radically different from what it originally was” (HF 236) and this is precisely how Adorno understands the mind/body relationship or the way in which consciousness emerged from instinct. Consciousness, reason, mind is not entirely different from matter, nor can it be reduced to it even though such complex functions of the nervous system may have been “mere” nature originally. Mind survives as matter, but is nonetheless different from matter because it has changed drastically over time. As Brian O’Connor states, Adorno’s position is both nonreductive *and* nondualistic (see O’Connor 2004, 92-8).

With the foregoing in mind, just as Freud understood instinct as a frontier concept, i.e. as something on the frontier between the physical and the mental, so does Adorno understand the addendum. As we saw above, instinct shows the intimate interaction of mind and body in that instinct is the “psychical representative” (see Freud 1989, 566) of internal stimuli that reach the mind. Instincts are a representation of the work demanded of the mind “in consequence of its connection with the body” (ibid.) and

in virtue of this instinct exhibits that mind and body are not so separate. The addendum is neither solely mental nor solely physical even though philosophy has ignored the physical element necessary for action in particular. The addendum, like instinct for Freud, illustrates that mind and body are not radically separate. Mind and body have an affinity with one another given the genesis of consciousness from instinct, but nonetheless they cannot be identified with one another.

It is because the addendum illustrates such an identity in difference that Adorno interestingly claims the addendum is an image or “phantasm ... of a reconciliation of mind and nature” (ND 229, trans. mod.). I wish to end this chapter with a discussion of the meaning of this claim.

The Addendum as an Image of Mind and Nature Reconciled

As both intramental and somatic in one, Adorno claims the addendum is “the rudiment of a phase in which the dualism of extramental and intramental was not thoroughly consolidated yet, neither volitively bridgeable nor an ontological ultimate” (ND 228). This claim along with the claim that the addendum is an image of mind and nature reconciled, Adorno claims the addendum is “a flash of light between the poles of something long past, something grown all but unrecognizable, and that which some day might come to be” (ND 229). Deborah Cook interprets this passage in the following way:

The addendum not only points back to an earlier stage of history in which human behaviour was largely reactive and reflexive, but also points forwards to a stage where nature and mind may finally be reconciled ... If, in the distant past, our

behaviour was purely reflexive, impulse later found itself in the service of the ego principle (HF 237), albeit as an element that appeared alien to the ego. In the future, however, Adorno would like to see neither the primitive state of undifferentiatedness from nature – the ‘terror of the blind nexus of nature’ – nor the delusional separation of subject and object in which the subject summarily reduces the object to itself, thereby “forgetting how much it is object itself” (SO 246). Instead, he endorses communication between what has historically been differentiated (Cook 2011, 54-5).

With this in mind, it will be beneficial to interpret Adorno’s statement that the addendum is a “flash of light” step by step.

As a “flash of light”, the addendum is a phantasm or glimmering image of something forgotten and something that may come to be. The pole comprising something long past is, as Cook claims, a “stage in history where human behaviour was largely reactive and reflexive” (ibid.). This is a stage that has not yet been overcome by the separation of subject and object. The worldview of the Middle Ages, for example, was, for Adorno, a stage wherein the subject saw itself as part of the world (HF 232), i.e. a stage wherein subject and object, insight and action, were not opposed. The same may be true for stages earlier than the Middle Ages but, at the very least, the pole of the distant past is a “phase in which the dualism of extramental and intramental was not thoroughly consolidated yet, neither volitionally bridgeable nor an ontological ultimate” (ND 228).

The question of the meaning of the pole in the distant past can be left aside. What is important is that Adorno does not want to return to such a stage, nor does he want the dualism of subject and object to continue. It is only owing to an impulse that is both

psychic and somatic that Adorno believes “freedom extends into the realm of experience” and this animates the concept of freedom “as a state in which nature would be neither blind nor oppressed” (ND 229). In a state wherein mind and nature are reconciled, nature would no longer be blind as it was both in the distant past and presently in the form of the instinct for self-preservation dominating all human thought and conduct. Nature would not be oppressed either because the subject would no longer be opposed to object, mind to nature, where the former category of these dichotomies dominates over the latter.

In an attempt to overcome the radical differentiation of mind and matter, Adorno redefines the will as

the lawful unity of all impulses that prove to be both spontaneous and rationally determined, as distinct from natural causality – although remaining in the framework of that causality, for outside the causal connection there can be no sequence of volitive acts. Freedom would be the word for the possibility of those impulses (ND 212).

For Adorno, the addendum, “is the same as the will and ... its existence is the strongest and most immediate proof that there is such a thing as freedom; it is neither blind nature nor oppressed nature” (HF 235). To act in a way such that both the psychic and somatic are necessary moments of action is neither for nature to act blindly (for the addendum is not solely impulse) nor is it for nature to be oppressed (impulse is not entirely suppressed). Therefore, when Adorno refers to a stage in the future wherein mind and nature are reconciled, he refers to when there would be, as Cook notes, “communication between what has historically been differentiated” (Cook 2011, 55). Although we cannot know exactly what it would look like for there to be communication

between mind and body, thinking about the role of the addendum in human action allows us to glimpse what such a reconciled state *might* look like.

Although Adorno is attempting to describe what free action must look like if it is possible and claims that this is an image of mind and body reconciled, the addendum should only be taken as something which *points* towards a reconciled state. Thinking about the role the addendum plays in human action, we can glimpse the way in which mind and body both do and ought to communicate with one another, a glimpse of their affinity. However, the addendum does not illustrate exactly what a reconciliation of mind and body would look like. The addendum is best understood as a reminder that mind and body are not as drastically different as much of the history of philosophy portrays, for, if they were, action, including free and moral action, would be impossible. The addendum reveals the affinity between mind and body, because only as a physical being can a conscious being act in a physical world. In the next chapter, I explore what it means for impulse to play an important role in moral acts in particular when I discuss the addendum as a moral addendum.

CHAPTER IV

THE MORAL ADDENDUM

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss how moral action involves both a psychic and a somatic component, for Adorno. However, Adorno does not believe that every act that has both of these components is moral. Accordingly, I discuss what Christoph Menke has dubbed Adorno's "impulse to solidarity" (Menke 2006, 71) as well as Jay Bernstein's comparison of the moral addendum with compassion to show that Adorno believes it is the impulsive response to suffering and physical pain in particular that has moral worth. Before hypothesizing why Adorno focuses on this kind of impulsive response in particular, I discuss his belief that some action needs no philosophical explanation with respect to why it ought or ought not be done, as well as his claim that, at times, rationally deliberating before acting is irrational. I will also explain how this kind of impulsive response counteracts the coldness Adorno believes was a condition for the Holocaust taking place and that remains rampant in contemporary society.

The Irrational Element in Moral Philosophy

At the beginning of *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, Adorno introduces the series of lectures he will deliver and explains that his topic will be moral philosophy as a "theoretical" discipline. He claims moral philosophy in this sense is distinct from and

does not necessarily deal with the “burning questions of the moral life” (PMP 1). Having published *Minima Moralia* a few years before this series of lectures began, Adorno cautions those attending who have read it that they should not expect him to lecture on how to live the good life. He will offer no practical guidance nor immediate help in answering the burning questions those attending the lecture may have, even though he acknowledges that the desire for such knowledge is justified.

Despite the fact that Adorno focuses on moral philosophy as a theoretical discipline in this series of lectures, he adds that “the moral sphere is not coterminous with the theoretical sphere” (PMP 7). Adorno makes this claim because, among other things, he believes that “the sphere of moral action includes something that cannot fully be described in intellectual terms” (PMP 7). Adorno describes this as a factor, element or moment (*das Moment*). He says

I find it extraordinarily difficult to find words to describe this factor, and this is no accident, since we are attempting to describe in theoretical terms an element of morality that is actually foreign to theory – and so to describe it in theoretical terms is not without an element of absurdity (PMP 7).

Adorno identifies this factor or moment with the term “spontaneity” which he defines as “the immediate, active reaction to particular situations” (PMP 7) and claims that “[w]here this factor is missing ... something like a valid practice is not possible” (PMP 7).

Although Adorno never uses the term “addendum” (*Hinzutretende*) in this series of lectures, the moment that he discusses is clearly the same phenomenon that he later

captures with the term “addendum”.¹³ The link between this factor and the addendum is clear, in the first instance, from the fact that the spontaneous moment Adorno describes in his lectures on moral philosophy is a kind of impulsive reaction to particular situations. In this context, however, Adorno describes the addendum as playing an important role in the relationship between theory and practice, and also claims that this factor is “fundamental to a definition of the moral” (PMP 7). As we saw in the previous chapter, the addendum is a concept that refers to the fact that, in addition to a psychic element, an impulse is necessary for action to occur. In this chapter, we will see how Adorno’s conception of moral action involves these two elements as well. In order to see how a spontaneous reaction to a particular situation is fundamental to a definition of the moral, for Adorno, we need to turn to a discussion of the “moral addendum”. This will not only show that the spontaneous reaction Adorno describes in his lectures on moral philosophy is the same phenomenon as the addendum, but it will bring to light Adorno’s conception of moral behaviour.

¹³ Indeed it is possible that Rodney Livingstone decided to translate *das Hinzutretende* as “the additional factor” (see HF 183, emphasis mine) in *History and Freedom* precisely because he was aware that the moment or factor Adorno discusses in *Problems of Moral Philosophy* was later dubbed the addendum once it was more fully developed.

The Moral Addendum

One of the most famous statements in *Negative Dialectics* occurs in the last section of the book where Adorno announces the new categorical imperative:

Hitler has imposed a new categorical imperative on human beings in their state of unfreedom: to arrange their thoughts and actions in such a way that Auschwitz should never be repeated, that nothing of the sort should ever happen again. This imperative is as resistant to explanation as was the given nature of Kant's imperative in its day. To treat it discursively would be an outrage: it gives us a bodily sensation of the moral addendum [*das Moment des Hinzutretenden am Sittlichen*]. 'Bodily', because it represents our active sense of abhorrence in the face of the intolerable physical pain to which individuals are exposed (ND 358, trans. mod.).

There is much in this short paragraph that deserves attention, but for the time being I only wish to focus on Adorno's introduction of the "moral addendum". In this passage Adorno is asserting that the moment of the addendum has a place in the moral (which is perhaps a more literal translation of "*das Moment des Hinzutretenden am Sittlichen*"). In particular, it is the bodily element of the addendum, i.e. its somatic side, that comes to the fore in moral situations such as when we are face to face with individuals suffering physical pain. This bodily element is not the only element of moral action, for Adorno. Just as free action required both a psychic and a somatic component, so does moral action. In order to better see how both of these elements are involved in moral behaviour, I turn to a pair of examples.

Both in *Problems of Moral Philosophy* and in *History and Freedom* Adorno discusses an example, which, similar to the “Buridan ass” thought experiment, brings us face to face with the idea of the addendum. This time, however, the example highlights the addendum in a specifically moral situation. In these texts Adorno discusses a conversation he had with Fabian von Schlabrendorff, who was arrested as an accomplice in the plot to kill Hitler on July 20, 1944. In this conversation, Adorno asked von Schlabrendorff

How was it possible for you and your friends to go ahead with this plot, knowing that you faced not just death – something that might fit with a so-called heroic attitude – but things that were inconceivably more horrific than death? ... Herr von Schlabrendorff replied without much hesitation: ‘The fact is I just couldn’t put up with things the way they were any longer. And I didn’t spend much time brooding about the possible consequences. I just followed the idea that anything would be better than for things to go on as they were’ (HF 240).

Adorno remarks that von Schlabrendorff did not appeal to theory when deciding what to do (PMP 8), but was simply explaining what motivated his actions. Commenting on this conversation, Adorno states

I believe that this act of resistance – the fact that things may be so intolerable that you feel compelled to make the attempt to change them, regardless of the consequences for yourself, and in circumstances in which you may also predict the possible consequences for other people – is the precise point at which the irrationality, or better, the irrational aspect of moral action is to be sought, the point at which it may be located (PMP 8).

Although von Schlabrendorff's action had an irrational aspect in that he disregarded the consequences of his actions for himself and others, there is another sense in which there was an irrational aspect to his act of resistance.

After recounting the exchange with von Schlabrendorff, Adorno claims "the true primal phenomenon of moral behaviour ... occurs when the element of impulse joins forces with the element of consciousness to bring about a spontaneous act" (HF 240). As we saw in the previous chapter, the addendum refers to the fact that, on the one hand, "practice, including political practice, calls for theoretical consciousness at its most advanced, and, on the other hand, it needs the corporeal element, the very thing that cannot be fully identified with reason" (HF 238). Both psyche and soma are required in order for action to take place that can be distinguished from solely natural processes. With the example of von Schlabrendorff, Adorno is claiming that moral behaviour must also have these two elements. Indeed, this is precisely what it means to say that the addendum has a place in the moral, i.e. it means that moral behaviour has both a psychic and a somatic element. Therefore, another reason why von Schlabrendorff's action involved an irrational element is because it comprises a somatic element, it was a kind of impulsive response. This element is of course only irrational to a philosopher who thinks that anything bodily is a hindrance to truth and morality. As we saw with Kant's philosophy, only actions dictated by reason are good, meaning that all empirically motivated action is not moral. For Adorno, however, this somatic element cannot be excluded from conceptions of moral behaviour just as it could not be excluded from a conception of action generally.

As we saw in the case of freedom, impulse is not the only element needed in order for a free act to occur: both impulse *and* a psychic component are required for free action to take place because, “[u]nconscious action, an action in which consciousness does not intervene, of the sort we find on the part of the dying, or very sick people or the mentally disabled, is purely a matter of reflexes. It cannot be distinguished from other natural processes” (HF 230). Von Schlabrendorff’s case illustrates that this is true for moral action as well. His act of resistance was clearly not solely impulsive; there are numerous things of which he needed to be aware. For example, if he was unaware of the political situation at the time and did not understand the threat that such a situation posed to his life and those close to him, then he would not have performed his act of resistance. Von Schlabrendorff was aware that the situation was so bad that it was better to attempt to change the situation, along with all the risks involved, than for him and those close to him to go on living in Nazi Germany. He also exhibited self-control in this reactionary act and self-control involves mental activity. For Adorno, these are the psychic elements that were needed in addition to the impulsive element with which psyche coincided or joined forces and each element is just as important as the other. Without these psychic elements, von Schlabrendorff’s act would have been indistinguishable from other natural process, and it is only by his action having such psychic elements in addition to impulse that it can be classified as moral.¹⁴

¹⁴ As noted in the previous chapter, the psychic element that is involved here is not necessarily “consciousness”, rather it is a kind of mental activity that

In *History and Freedom*, Adorno mentions another example that exemplifies moral action as involving both a psychic and a somatic component. This is a story that is rumoured to have happened to Nietzsche (see Kaufman 1974, 67). Adorno makes reference to the writer Peter Altenberg and quotes the following aphorism:

Maltreatment of horses. This will only cease when the passers-by have become so irritable and decadent that, abandoning their self-control, they fall into a rage at the sight of such things and in their desperation commit crimes and shoot down the dastardly, cowardly coachmen ... The inability to bear the sight of horses being maltreated is the act of the neurasthenic, decadent people of the future! Up to now, they have had just enough strength to enable them to mind their own business ... (as quoted in HF 154-55).

Adorno claims that where the type of reaction described by Altenberg is absent, “where there is no indignation about the lack of freedom, there can be no room for ideas of freedom and humanity” (HF 239). The reaction to the coachmen is indeed a spontaneous, impulsive reaction to a particular situation, but a psychic element is also involved here. The individual must find the abuse of a horse intolerable and be willing to take on the consequences of his (or her) actions. The impulsive, physical response to such a sight

cannot be reduced to natural processes nor is it entirely distinct from natural processes. The psychic component is also natural and the somatic component is also psychic.

goes hand in hand with such beliefs and commitments it is only via both of these elements coming together that the act could take place.

What both the example of von Schlabrendorff and Nietzsche express is that it is difficult to separate the two elements that are involved in moral action: the psychic and the somatic element. With von Schlabrendorff, it is clear that he both acted impulsively and was aware of certain things that came into play when he impulsively reacted. He did not act solely on impulse, nor did reason cause him to act on its own. Von Schlabrendorff's act of resistance involved both psychic and somatic components. What von Schlabrendorf and the individual Altenberg describes were aware of did not necessarily precede or determine the impulsive response that took place in these situations. On the contrary, the psychic and somatic elements of the action come into play at the same time, neither occurs before the other, and each is necessary in order for these acts to be moral. Therefore, Adorno's point is that neither impulse nor psyche on its own is sufficient to produce a moral action and that both are always involved even if it seems as though each element can be easily distinguished from the other.

Because these examples illustrate that both psyche and soma are necessary elements of moral action, Adorno believes that correct moral action does not simply require correct moral knowledge. In order to illustrate this point it will be beneficial to briefly compare Adorno's conception of right action to that of Plato.

According to Plato, most notably in the *Protagoras*, knowledge is identical with virtue. Virtuous actions are the result of correct knowledge and this means that if I perform a virtuous action it is only because I have the correct knowledge. Moreover, as long as I have the correct knowledge I am *incapable* of performing the incorrect action. A

consequence of this is that as long as I have the correct moral knowledge I cannot be prevented from acting according to such knowledge by my desires, for example. Indeed, desire in Plato's writings, in contrast to Adorno, is a prime example of how our animal nature is a hindrance to moral action. As Dorothea Frede notes "Socrates' proof in the *Protagoras* that reason cannot be overcome by the passions has — from Aristotle on — been treated as a denial of *akrasia*, of the phenomenon that was later dubbed 'weakness of the will'" (Frede 2009). *Akrasia* or "weakness of will" is the phenomenon of acting against one's better judgment. Indeed, if knowledge and virtue are identical, it is impossible for me to act in a way other than that directly follows from what I know. If I appear to act in a way that is not consistent with what I appear to know, then I do not know what I appear to know because these two things, knowledge and action, are always consistent for Plato.

According to Adorno, the identification of knowledge and virtue in Plato, i.e. that my actions always match up with what I know, makes a decisive element of moral action disappear. For Adorno, "the fact that I have the right consciousness does not at all imply that I shall act in accordance with that right consciousness" (PMP 112). Because of this, Fabian Freyenhagen is correct to say that, according to Adorno's conception of the relationship between knowledge and action, "*akrasia* could be analysed as a will that lacks the physical impulse and so fails for this reason" (Freyenhagen 2005, 59, note 54). Adorno illustrated this with his example of Hamlet where Hamlet knew what ought to be done yet could not carry out the action. In Hamlet's situation, knowledge and action are in contradiction with one another rather than always consistent as in Plato. As Adorno puts it, Hamlet experiences a "divergence of insight and action" (ND 228). Hamlet's

inability to act does not indicate that he did not know what ought to be done. On the contrary, Hamlet had a conception of what he ought to do but could not act on it. Insight requires impulse in order for action to occur, for Adorno. No moral action can take place, regardless of whatever moral knowledge an individual may possess, so long as there is no impulsive element that joins forces with a psychic element. This is because knowledge itself is not physical and only something physical can act in a material world.

As we saw in the first chapter, Kant believed that action caused by reason alone was action that had moral worth. This meant that reason needed to determine the will despite inclinations to the contrary, and that even if our inclinations determined the will to produce an action in conformity with what reason requires, it would still not be an action that has moral worth. Adorno's inclusion of an impulsive element to moral action suggests not only that impulse is needed in order for moral acts to take place at all, i.e. that without impulse or a somatic element we cannot *act*. Adorno is also asserting that actions that have impulse as their determining ground can be moral, i.e. that there is room for material motives in a conception of moral action. Indeed, Adorno considers it a "grave objection" to Kant's moral theory that there is no room for material motives of the kind illustrated by von Schlabrendorff and Altenberg (see HF 239).

However, it is not just any material motive, but a certain kind of material motive that Adorno believes ought to be included in a definition of moral action. Adorno cannot say that moral behaviour is any behaviour that involves both psyche and soma. Such a view is problematic because it cannot be the case that *any* act involving these two elements is a moral act. According to Christoph Menke, for example, the problem with Adorno's conception of moral action is that "an action certainly can be morally good only

if it arises from an impulse (because in the absence of an impulse it would not have a reason [i.e. a ground or cause] at all); but not every action which arises from an impulse or spontaneous stirring is already, as a consequence, good” (Menke 2006, 208, note 89).¹⁵ Hate crimes against homosexuals or racial hate crimes, for example, are surely acts that involve impulse and that are at the same time joined by the belief that individuals belonging to such groups are evil, or not deserving of life, etc. Such actions surely cannot be moral on Adorno’s account, yet they still involve both a psychic and a somatic component. In order for Adorno’s position to make sense, therefore, what he is arguing must be that it is only a certain *kind* action that is both somatic and mental that can be classified as moral. In order to see what kind of action this is, I shall discuss Christoph Menke’s interpretation of what he calls Adorno’s “impulse to solidarity” (Menke 2006, 71), and Jay Bernstein’s comparison of the moral addendum to compassion.

¹⁵ Menke’s objection is that Adorno risks implying that all solely impulsive action is good. Because Adorno believes moral action has both a psychic *and* a somatic component, it is more correct to say that the problem Adorno faces is explaining why only some and not all action that has these two components is good.

Compassion and the Impulse to Solidarity

According to Menke, morality, for Adorno, is “an expression of the impulse to solidarity” (Menke 2006, 71) and “[m]oral action is action which arises from the feeling of solidarity” (ibid., 75). For Menke, solidarity is mimetically constituted, it is

[a] mimesis of the other’s adverse reaction to his suffering and pain. Solidarity is, in Adorno, an affirmative relationship to the other – but it is a somatic-affective affirmation of the other’s somatic-affective refusal of his suffering and pain. Solidarity is *sympathy*, then, in the literal sense: it is our reenactment of the other’s suffering. Because it is mimetic, such a reenactment or imitation is immediate, that is, it is not mediated by any reflective judgment ... Mimesis implies that nothing is added in the transition from the other’s perspective upon himself to our perspective upon him. Our taking on of the suffering of the other, and hence of his judgment, ensues in an unexamined manner (ibid., 76).

Menke adds that this does not mean that “solidaric sympathy” has no judgemental content, however, because “it contains a judgment that the suffering of the other should not exist – insofar as it simply repeats the judgment of the other (according to which *his* suffering ought not to exist)” (ibid., 76). So although it is an *impulse* to solidarity, there is also a psychic element involved here, despite there being a sense in which the judgemental content that comes into play is unexamined. To conceive of the moral addendum as an impulse to solidarity, understood as a kind of sympathy, is important, however, because sympathy has not always been included in definitions of the moral.

According to Jay Bernstein, it is compassion that is “the historical archetype for the moral addendum” (ADE 405). For Kant, there is no duty to be compassionate, which means that compassion is not an action that has moral worth. Kant makes this claim because he believes compassion increases the suffering in the world. In a section discussing sympathy in *The Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant states that “when another suffers and, although I cannot help him, I let myself be infected by his pain (through my imagination), then two of us suffer, though the trouble really (in nature) affects only *one*” (Kant 1996, 6:457). For Bernstein, it is precisely because Kantian morality excludes compassion from the category of action that has moral worth that Kantian morality is cold. To deny compassion is to deny “the appropriateness of responsiveness” (ADE 405) for Bernstein.

According to Bernstein, “[c]ompassion expresses a solidarity of human beings” (ADE 405). This is so because “in immediately taking your pain as a reason for my acting I treat your suffering as equivalent with my own; and hence even when acting is impossible, my co-suffering with you functions as a bond between us, a *valuing* of your hurt as what should not be” (ADE 406). Like Menke, therefore, Bernstein believes that a kind of mimesis of another’s suffering takes place when we immediately respond to the suffering of individuals, and this kind of compassion expresses human solidarity. This is precisely the kind of psycho-somatic response that is moral for Adorno.

Indeed, on Menke’s reading, the realization of “the impulse to solidarity with suffering individuals” is at one and the same time the realization of morality (Menke 2006, 79). For Menke, “to realize morality means to follow the impulse of solidarity with suffering individuals” (ibid., 79). What this means is that the type of action that is both

somatic and mental and at the same time moral is the kind of compassionate action that the impulse to solidarity captures. It is impulsive responses to these situations in particular that are moral *and these only* that the moral addendum seems to capture.

According to Menke and Bernstein, therefore, the kinds of actions that are moral and yet have a material motive, that have both an impulsive AND a psychic component, are the impulses that mimetically respond to the suffering of other individuals, that share suffering and make another's suffering one's own and that impulsively act to stop such suffering.

That these impulsive responses themselves realize morality means one further thing, and this is that nothing further needs to take place beyond the realization of this impulse in particular in order for an act to be moral, i.e. the impulse to solidarity does not need to be *rationalized*, explained, or justified as to *why* it is moral. Before answering why this kind of action needs no philosophical explanation or justification, I first turn to why Adorno believes this kind of action is important in contemporary society.

Coldness

In the last section of *Negative Dialectics*, Adorno raises the powerful question of whether after Auschwitz you can go on living – especially whether one who escapes by accident, one who by rights should have been killed, may go on living. His mere survival calls for the coldness, the basic principle of bourgeois

subjectivity, without which there could have been no Auschwitz; this is the drastic guilt of him who was spared (ND 363).

The question of whether one may go on living, particularly in the case of one who escaped Auschwitz seemingly by accident, is the question of just how profound survival guilt is.

What Adorno is referring to in this last section, however, is a complex kind of survival guilt; guilt at having to adopt the same principle that made Auschwitz possible, i.e. coldness, simply in order to go on living. As Bernstein explains

what enables one to survive is ... nothing but the drive for self preservation, and the coldness and indifference, structural in both our institutions and personal comportment, intrinsic to instrumental rationality as the rational form of the drive to self-preservation (ADE 397).

The drive for self-preservation takes on a rational form when reason is used instrumentally as a tool to determine the best means of survival. Instrumental rationality, means/ends thinking, is calculating, cold, and devoid of feeling. What Adorno means by coldness is complex, but as we shall see in what follows, surviving in contemporary capitalist society often involves being concerned about one's own interests at the expense of everyone else's. That the survivor of Auschwitz is forced to be cold in this sense in order to survive is precisely why his or her guilt is so profound. It was only by being indifferent towards the fate of others that the Holocaust was able to take place, and to have to continue being indifferent in order to survive would be troubling for a survivor to say the least.

Adorno's most extensive discussion of coldness takes place in "Education After Auschwitz". In this article, Adorno's primary definition of coldness states that people are cold when they are "profoundly indifferent toward whatever happens to everyone else except for a few to whom they are closely bound" (EAA 201). Adorno also describes those who are cold as those who "deny the possibility of love", "withdraw their love from other people initially, before it can even unfold", have "[t]he inability to identify with others" and those who have an "indifference [toward] the fate of others" (EAA 201). This is a psychological condition (EAA 201) and is a quality of the "societal monad", "a fundamental trait of anthropology, that is, the constitution of people as they in fact exist in our society" (EAA 201). The pursuit of one's own interest, for example, which contemporary capitalist society is both founded upon and encourages, is precisely "the pursuit of one's own interests against the interests of everyone else" (EAA 201). Adorno claims that society has been based upon this principle for centuries and believes "[t]his has settled into the character of people to their innermost centre" (EAA 201). The bourgeois subject is a monad, is an "isolated competitor" (EAA 201), is one who "pursues one's own advantage before all else" (EAA 201) and as such is indifferent towards others.

With the idea of the moral addendum, Adorno is asserting that action that overcomes coldness or is a counterweight to it is action that has moral worth. By insisting that action that adopts and responds to the suffering of another is moral, Adorno is pushing for solidarity, love, and warmth, the counter-image to coldness. Indeed, he is stressing this kind of action because he realizes the pervasiveness of coldness and that, as he claims in the passage cited above, living on after Auschwitz even requires it.

Adorno also claims that the act of reflection itself, the kind of withdrawal that goes hand in hand with serious thought, is prone to adopt coldness as well. This makes Adorno himself vulnerable to coldness and subject to guilt. As he claims in *Minima Moralia*, “[t]he detached observer is as much entangled as the active participant ... the very moment of withdrawal [i.e. reflection] bears features of what it negates. [Reflection] is forced to develop a coldness indistinguishable from that of the bourgeois” (Adorno 1974, 26). It is part of the dialectic of coldness that the kind of serious reflection that is needed now more than ever necessarily entangles itself in a feature of the situation it attempts to overcome.

Now that we have seen why responding to the suffering of individuals is important in contemporary society, we can return to one implication of Menke’s claim that realizing the impulse to solidarity is at the same time the realization of morality for Adorno: that this kind of moral behaviour needs no philosophical justification. That an act can be moral but requires no justification as to *why* it is moral is a claim that flies in the face of nearly the entire history of ethics, and it is this issue I now wish to explore.

The Justification of Moral Action and Rational Deliberation

As we saw at the beginning of this chapter, Adorno claims that his new categorical imperative is “resistant to explanation” and “to treat it discursively would be an outrage” (ND 358). Adorno expands on why this is so towards the end of the freedom model where he says

It is not in their nauseating parody, sexual repression, that moral questions are succinctly posed; it is in lines such as: No man should be tortured; there should be no concentration camps – while all of this continues in Asia and Africa and is repressed merely because, as ever, the humanity of civilization is inhumane toward the people it shamelessly brands as uncivilized.

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.

We criticize morality by criticizing the extension of the logic of consistency to the conduct of men; this is where the stringent logic of consistency becomes an organ of unfreedom. The impulse – naked physical fear, and the sense of solidarity with what Brecht called ‘tormentable bodies’ – is immanent in moral conduct and would be denied in attempts at ruthless rationalization. What is most urgent would become contemplative again, mocking its own urgency (ND 285-6).

To claim that the statements “no man should be tortured” and “there should be no concentration camps” are true as an impulse is therefore to claim these statements require no philosophical justification; they should not be rationalized and made into an abstract principle. If one were to rationalize them, one would involve such statements in the “bad infinity of derivation and validity”, which, as Gerhard Schweppenhäuser notes, is the

infinite chain of logical justification; infinite because it is not possible to reach a stage at which a particular (moral) claim is ultimately justified or validated (Schweppenhäuser 2004, 350-351, note 17). As Adorno states above, to extend the logic of consistency to the conduct of men is to make reason an organ of unfreedom.

Immediately after discussing how “moral action cannot be wholly translated into its theoretical determinants without remainder” (PMP 97) in *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, Adorno states that “[i]f we were to attempt to set up an absolute law and to ask the laws of pure reason to explain why on earth it would be wrong to torture people, we would encounter all sorts of difficulties” (PMP 97). With respect to the question of torturing prisoners, Adorno says “the moment you confront [questions such as these] with reason” i.e. the moment you attempt to provide reasons for why it is wrong to torture people, “you find yourself plunged into a terrible dialectic. And when faced by this dialectic the ability to say, ‘Stop!’ and ‘You *ought* not even to contemplate such things!’ has its advantages” (PMP 97). If providing a philosophical justification for why it is wrong to torture people is to make reason into an organ of unfreedom, then Adorno is claiming that there are times when it is more rational to *not* provide a philosophical explanation for why one ought or ought not perform certain actions.

In this context Adorno mentions the conclusion to the story of the good Samaritan and claims “the injunction ‘Go, and do thou likewise’ contains something that ... is no less essential a part of moral theory than the rationality that requires me to be able to explain why I should go and do likewise” (PMP 97). In the Gospel of Luke, the story of the good Samaritan is offered by Jesus in response to a lawyer’s request for a definition of a neighbour so that the lawyer may know how one ought to love one’s neighbours. The

Samaritan is offered as an example of an individual who knows who his neighbours are, but no distinctions between neighbours and non-neighbours are made in the story, nor are any explanations offered of what it means to be a neighbour per se. After recounting the story, Jesus simply instructs the lawyer to “Go and do likewise”, i.e. behave like the good Samaritan, without offering an explanation of what being a neighbour consists in, or why the good Samaritan ought to have done what he did.¹⁶

Adorno’s point in making reference to this story is that there are times when behaving morally does not require a philosophical explanation, justification or validation of certain actions. Knowing the answer to “What shall I do?” sometimes does not require that reason explain *why* I should do certain things. It is wrong to torture people, to make others suffer, and to cause pain, and we do not need to explain why with reasons. These statements are true as a response to the fact that somewhere suffering is taking place.

In addition to claiming that sometimes it is more rational to forgo philosophically explaining why one ought or ought not perform certain actions, Adorno also claims that it is sometimes more rational to forgo rationally deliberating before acting. In order to illustrate this point, Adorno refers to Kant’s example of the refugee who comes to your door and asks for shelter. On this Adorno asks:

¹⁶ It is not without significance that the Samaritan is “responding” to an individual experiencing pain and suffering on the side of a road. One could indeed claim that this story is an additional example of moral action as resistance, as an instinctual response/reaction of “abhorrence in the face of suffering”.

What would be the consequence if you were to set the entire machinery of reflection in motion, instead of simply acting and telling yourself that here is a refugee who is about to be killed or handed over to some state police in some country or other, and that your duty therefore is to hide and protect him – and that every other consideration must be subordinated to this? If reason makes its entrance at this point then reason itself becomes irrational (PMP 97).

Adorno's point here is that sometimes it is more important, and indeed more rational, to not reflect on a situation before acting. There are some situations that demand immediate action such that to "set the entire machinery of reflection in motion" (ibid.) would be to act immorally. Indeed, some situations are so complex that rationally deliberating before acting would require so much reflection such that we would never reach the point of taking action, and during the process of deliberation we would allow atrocities to happen. Therefore, to rationally deliberate when immediate action is required is for reason to be immoral.

Based on everything that has been said above, one could ask why Adorno believes responding to suffering and physical pain in particular is so important. We have already seen that responding to others who experience such things counteracts the coldness that is so pervasive in capitalist society, and we have also seen that Adorno wishes to establish the material motivation to correct such suffering as an action that has moral worth in contrast to Kant. But why does Adorno focus on this material motive in particular? Since Adorno stresses the material, impulsive element of moral action with the idea of the moral addendum, surely there are other actions that have a material motive that are moral. The question is, therefore: why does Adorno focus exclusively on suffering and physical

pain and wish to establish the impulsive response to such things as action that has moral worth? It is with a discussion of this issue that I wish to end the chapter.

Suffering

One of the most famous statements in *Negative Dialectics* is Adorno's claim that the "need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth" (ND 17-18). Truth, for Adorno, is not timeless and static, nor universal and necessary as it is for Kant. For example, with respect to moral truth Adorno claims that it is a "truism" that "the content of the moral principle, the categorical imperative, constantly changes as history changes" (HF 206). Indeed, Adorno's new categorical imperative is linked to a specific event in history, the Holocaust or Shoa, and its content may still change. Indeed, one could claim that in the twenty-first century the content of the categorical imperative is to prevent an event like 9/11 or Abu Ghraib from happening again.

It is interesting that, as Bernstein notes, to urge that Auschwitz should never happen again "while humanly comprehensible would be idle since unless one had grasped *why* Auschwitz occurred and *what* occurred there ... the imperative to arrange our thoughts and actions to prevent it or its like reoccurrence could not even begin to specify what imaginably so arranging our thoughts and actions amounted to" (ADE 385). Indeed, Adorno's new imperative is vague in a way similar to the way in which Kant's was, i.e. neither of them provides a specific answer to the question "What shall I do"? Interestingly, however, the idea of the moral addendum may give us a clue as to what one must do in order to prevent Auschwitz from happening.

Adorno wishes to establish that an impulsive response to suffering that seeks to end it is a type of action that has moral worth. He does so because he believes such action is capable of preventing Auschwitz from happening again. An individual who responds to suffering in an effort to stop it is an individual incapable of standing by and watching suffering take place around him or her. This is precisely how the impulsive response to suffering counteracts and overcomes the coldness that Adorno believes was the condition for Auschwitz happening. Therefore, by establishing the material motive to end suffering as an action that has moral worth, Adorno is encouraging us to become individuals incapable of standing by and letting something like Auschwitz happen again. Such individuals would not be indifferent towards the fate of others, but would be sympathetic and compassionate. Indeed, Adorno places emphasis on impulse and this material motive because it is such psycho-somatic responses and *not* abstract morality that would prevent Auschwitz from happening again.

In *History and Freedom*, Adorno cites a passage from Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* in which Hegel critiques Kant's moral philosophy. The passage is as follows:

That right and ethics, and the actual world of right and the ethical, are grasped by means of thoughts and give themselves the form of rationality – namely universality and determinacy – by means of *thought*, is what constitute *the law*; and it is this which is justifiably regarded as the main enemy by that feeling which reserves the right to do as it pleases, by that conscience which identifies right with subjective conviction. The form of right as a *duty* and a *law* is felt by it to be a *dead, cold letter* and a *shackle*; for it does not recognize itself in the law and thereby recognize its own freedom in it, because the law is the reason of the thing

[*Sache*] and reason does not allow feeling to warm itself in the glow of its own particularity (HF 63).

In this passage, Hegel critiques the idea of duty and law as solely rational and devoid of feeling. Conscience experiences rational duty as cold, and this is the enemy of the conscience that believes “right” is a matter of subjective conviction and feeling. Adorno too feels that abstract morality is of no help in preventing suffering from taking place.

In his *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, Bernstein cites an address given by Heinrich Himmler to the SS that was used to prepare them for carrying out Hitler’s final solution. In this address, Himmler states that “[e]ach member of the SS, and by extension each German citizen, would be revolted and horrified at the piles of bodies which mass extermination requires” (ADE 409). Himmler claims that it is “ordinary human compassion” (409) that would prevent mass extermination and therefore calls for the SS to become hard and cold in order to be able to carry out the final solution. As Bernstein notes, “[t]hat Himmler presupposes that it is not ordinary morality but compassion that would be the greatest bar to the carrying out of the administrative murder is telling ... Ordinary morality apparently presents no particular obstruction” (ADE 409). This is why Adorno focuses on the impulsive response to end suffering, i.e. because he feels it is not only what we are aware of, know, or can philosophically explain that would prevent the Holocaust from happening again. It is not only our mental but our physical being that must prevent the Holocaust from happening again; impulsively responding to suffering in an effort to end it is one way by which this can be achieved. In contrast to Kant, therefore, what is bodily is not evil and a threat to truth. On the contrary, it is by

acknowledging our bodily nature and embracing our material motives for action that we can prevent suffering and pain from happening.

Just as Adorno is for the most part unclear with respect to what it would look like to arrange our thoughts and action in such a way that Auschwitz could not happen again, he is unclear with respect to whether or not we should respond to any and every occurrence of suffering in an effort to end it. Since Adorno believes our impulsive responses to suffering are not devoid of psychic activity, presumably he believes that we ought to respond to only those instances of suffering that we recognize as requiring immediate action to stop it. It could be argued that Adorno did not concern himself with describing which particular instances of suffering called for immediate correction because his main concern was simply to illustrate that this kind of response has moral worth, despite its impulsive character. To conclude with a speculation, surely by stopping every and all instances of physical pain we would be preventing the worst from happening. However, I think Adorno would find more important the response to situations similar to the one in which von Schlabrendorff found himself. Preventing Auschwitz from happening again involves responding to the physical pain that can be rightfully deemed “suffering”, i.e. the instances where a response is required because anything would be better than for them to continue to exist.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I have discussed Adorno's concept of the "addendum". This concept is connected to Adorno's critique of "the idealist equation of freedom and reason" and, at first glance at least, Adorno's position is convincing. For a physical being to act in a physical world, action *must* have a physical component. Kant also acknowledged that human beings are physical beings, but, in order to act freely and to produce action that has moral worth, an individual must act independently of their empirical being and on reason alone. The action produced by reason must nonetheless take place in the empirical world, but, as I have shown at the end of the first chapter, it is difficult to understand how Kant thought the empirical and intelligible worlds are unified.

Adorno did not need to consider Kant's attempt to unify the world of sense and the world of understanding because, for Adorno, human nature cannot be divided. As I illustrated in the second chapter, mind and body have an affinity with one another, for Adorno, such that it does not make sense to think of them as radically distinct in the first place and posit ourselves as having both an empirical and an intelligible character.

My main subject of concern in this thesis has been Adorno's conception of action, and he rethinks the nature of action from a different picture of human nature. As Adorno claims in *Problems of Moral Philosophy*, "any being that stands outside nature and might be described as a human subject can be said to possess consciousness of self, the capacity for self-reflection in which the self observes: I myself am a part of nature" (PMP 103-4). This statement asserts that, despite the ability of human beings to reflect on themselves

and to distance themselves from nature in thought, self-reflection is a capacity of a natural being. Human beings are unique in that they alone possess the capacity to reflect on themselves, but possessing this capacity or any other, e.g. rationality, does not remove us from the natural world. Human beings are distinct from nature in that they alone are able to reflect on themselves as natural beings. This is important, for Adorno, because it implies that human beings should not narcissistically believe themselves to be above the natural world, other human beings included.

In that we are always natural beings despite our possession of the capacity for self-reflection, reason, etc., Adorno does not believe that the possibility of freedom and morality rests on our being able to act independently of our natural being. Kant was wrong to believe that we could achieve this independence, and his conception of free and moral action is problematic and unconvincing because it requires us to think of ourselves as, in part, outside of and separate from the natural world. Adorno's position is more realistic than Kant's in the sense that Adorno considers human beings to be natural beings with capacities that are rooted, i.e. have their genesis, in their natural being. Human beings are not unities of two substances or characters, they are natural beings that have developed in ways that make them unique and distinct from the rest of nature. As such, I believe Adorno's is a more convincing conception of human action. *If* it is possible for human beings to produce free actions and actions that have moral worth, then it is only as natural beings. Indeed, Adorno's position is persuasive because it salvages the possibility of freedom and morality in light of the problems with Kant's system.

Since Adorno's discussion of the addendum occurs, for the most part, in a four-page section of text, it is difficult to determine the meaning of Adorno's position at times

and there are numerous unanswered questions. For example, as I indicated, it is difficult to determine the precise nature of the mental element that comes into play in action given it is different from “consciousness”, “reason” etc.. Also, it is arguable that only certain kinds of mental activity come into play when we act, and surely different kinds of actions involve different kinds of mental activity. Adorno did not discuss these issues in connection with his concept of the addendum, but they are very interesting questions that most certainly deserve serious reflection.

It is also worth considering what other types of materially motivated actions might have moral worth. Surely it is not only the response to suffering and physical pain that has moral worth. Given *all* action has a physical component, there must be other kinds of actions that are moral besides the kind that responds to suffering and physical pain. Also, there are even times when the moral status of such responses is questionable. For example, suppose one were to respond to a person getting stabbed with an action that ends the stabbing and allows the victim to escape. If one were to learn later that the stabbing was carried out in self-defence and stopping the stabbing allowed the perpetrator rather than the victim to flee and avoid responsibility for the stabbing, does the moral status of such a response change? Is such a response morally good simply because it ends suffering and physical pain? Perhaps, but Adorno’s point seems to be that, at the very minimum, such responses are *capable* of moral *evaluation*; that their being materially motivated does not exclude them from the realm of morality. Therefore, it would be interesting to investigate what other materially motivated actions are capable of moral evaluation in addition to responding to suffering and physical pain.

There is much that can still be discussed regarding many of the subjects I treat in this thesis. Adorno's insights are often significant because they encourage us to think of certain problems in drastically different ways, and this necessarily leads to more that needs to be investigated. At the very minimum, what I hope to have illustrated in this thesis is that the addendum is a concept that can be counted among the many of Adorno's ideas worthy of extended discussion, and that it is a concept that encourages us to think about a number of philosophical problems in novel ways.

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