TRAUMA AND THE ETHICAL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Katherine Anne Schick

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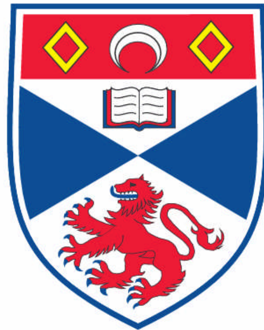

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TRAUMA AND THE ETHICAL IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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Submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

25 April 2008

I, Katherine Anne Schick, hereby certify that this thesis, which is approximately 72,000 words in length, has been written by me, that it is the record of work carried out by me and that it has not been submitted in any previous application for a higher degree.

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ABSTRACT

The suffering that initially prompts ethical reflection is frequently forgotten in the generalised rational response of much contemporary International Relations theory. This thesis draws on Theodor W. Adorno and Gillian Rose to propose an alternative approach to suffering in world politics.

Adorno argues suffering and trauma play a key role in the task of enlightening Enlightenment. They emphasise the concrete particularity of human existence in a way that is radically challenging to Enlightenment thought. Understanding suffering helps to drive a negative dialectics that preserves the non-identical (that which cannot be understood, manipulated or controlled by reason), holding it up against the instrumentalism and abstraction that have prevented Enlightenment thought from fulfilling its promise.

Part One reviews contemporary approaches to international ethics in a way that draws out their affinity with the Enlightenment thought Adorno criticises. Despite their variety, liberal and Habermasian approaches to international ethics tend to be rational and problem-solving, to assume moral progress, to underestimate the importance of history and culture, and to neglect inner lives. They approach ethics in a way that pays too little attention to the social, historical, and cultural antecedents of suffering and therefore promotes solutions that, whilst

in some ways inspiring, are too disconnected from the suffering they seek to address to be effective in practice.

Part Two deepens the critique of modern ethics through an exposition of Adorno's work. It then draws on Adorno's conception of promise, Rose's writing on mourning and political risk, and a broader literature on ways of working through trauma to propose an alternative way of being in the world with ethical and political implications. I advocate a neo-Hegelian *work* of mourning, which deepens understanding of the complexities of violence and informs a difficult, tentative, anxiety-ridden taking of political risk in pursuit of a good enough justice.

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INTRODUCTION

Violence and suffering are rife in global politics. In this thesis, I examine and critique the normative responses to suffering in mainstream and critical international political thought. I argue that ethical reflection in International Relations is prompted by global suffering, but the suffering that initially prompts reflection is forgotten in the generalised, rational response. I draw on the thought of Theodor W. Adorno and Gillian Rose to suggest an alternative way of thinking about and responding to violence and suffering. Unless traumatic experiences are worked through, they trigger either withdrawal from political engagement or a search for revenge and further violence. I advocate mourning and critical reflection in response to trauma and suffering to enable social and political reengagement in life. Such a response is a significant shift in focus from mainstream responses to violence, which skim over past and present suffering in an attempt to legislate a halt to cycles of violence; instead, it acknowledges the historical and structural antecedents of present realities, allowing space for grieving and reflection rather than rushing too quickly to solutions.

Modern International Ethics and its Weaknesses

In the early years of International Relations, a realist paradigm dominated the field. Realist thinkers such as E. H. Carr and Hans Morgenthau perceived the international system as

oriented always towards self-preservation and counselled prudence in political judgement. Where morality was discussed,[1] it was tempered with a strong pessimism with regard to the possibility of social learning and self-interest was assumed always to be at the heart of state action. Such thinkers maintained that international politics were irredeemably tragic and therefore unable to make steady progress towards the good. Any belief to the contrary was not only ill-judged but actively dangerous, masking self-interest with humanitarian intent.[2]

The normative turn in International Relations emerged in recent decades as a desire to 'do something' in response to the atrocities of modern world politics and, unlike realism, has belief in moral progress through rational argument at its core.[3] The normative voices that sound loudest are human rights discourse and the global justice movement. The human rights regime developed in reaction to the carnage of World War II, when citizens had no legal justification for disobeying state orders that they thought to be morally wrong.[4] After the Holocaust, the cry 'never again' prompted legal response in an effort to provide the normative guidelines that the international system lacked and in the hope of preventing future horrors. Global justice literature emerged somewhat later in the context of opposition to the Vietnam

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[1] As indeed it was, contrary to the popular understanding of political realism. See, for example, Nicholas J. Rengger, 'Tragedy or Skepticism? Defending the Anti-Pelagian Mind in World Politics', *International Relations*, Vol. 19, No. 3 (2005), pp. 321-328; Richard Ned Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of World Politics: Ethics, Interests, and Orders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); William E. Scheuerman, 'Realism and the Left: the case of Hans J. Morgenthau', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1 (2008), pp. 29-51.

[2] See, for example, Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (ed.), forward by Tracy B. Strong (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 54. Schmitt is particularly wary of wars fought in the name of progress and humanity, saying that these inevitably involve the denigration and dehumanization of the enemy.

[3] Of course, security still remains the key goal of states: both internally and externally, and normative interventions in world politics are rarely, if ever, purely altruistic or without an eye to self-interest.

[4] Michael Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, A. Gutman (ed.) (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 4-5.

War. Debates regarding the ethics of force paved the way for more general questions about justice, both domestic and international.

This thesis argues that a normative turn in International Relations theory was necessary in the face of global suffering, bringing attention to issues that had been obscured by a focus on security. However, these normative responses have fallen primarily within a too narrow conception of ethics, one that draws heavily on a Rawlsian liberalism with justice at its core. This liberal conception of ethics places heavy emphasis on a particular way of knowing (positivist and rational) and a particular way of approaching ethical questions (problem-solving and forward-looking) and is problematic in a number of ways. I draw on Raymond Geuss's helpful characterisation of modern ethics in my critique of international political thought, and argue that both the normative and (to a lesser extent) critical turn in International Relations theory share these modern characteristics.

Geuss maintains that modern Western ethical thought has a kind of elective affinity with Kantian thought in prioritising rational knowledge and universal moral guidelines.[5] The type of knowledge that is central to modern ethical thought is 'useful knowledge': knowledge that generates empirically verifiable facts about how the world works and general principles that can be used to make predictions and rationally prescribe action. This technical knowledge influences ethical thought in turn. The central ethical question can be summarised as 'What

[5] Geuss cites Kant's three questions, the answers to which comprise the whole of human interest: 'What can I know? What ought I to do? What may I hope for?' and argues that modern thought asks very similar questions (although he makes no argument for their direct influence). Raymond Geuss, *Outside Ethics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 2-3.

ought we to do?' The response generates 'some set of universal laws or rules or principles; in particular, a set of universal laws on which "we" would all agree (under some further specified circumstance)'.[6] The 'ought' of 'What ought we to do?' is an abstract, rational ought; it is a generalisable 'ought' that is universally applicable, seeks to restrict subjective judgment, and takes the struggle out of making judgments by prescribing clear guidelines for action. Geuss argues that this approach to ethical thought is problematic, closing off whole avenues of thought for consideration. In particular, abstract social contract methods do not encourage consideration of history or politics, and there is little or no room for contingency. The central ethical question is what Geuss terms the first pillar of modern ethics. The second pillar is a sort of immanentism, a restriction of thought to that which can be fully known, observed, measured, and predicted, and a dismissal of that which is outside our full comprehension.

Geuss advocates a *critical* theory that steps outside generally accepted beliefs about how the world works.[7] Such an approach is necessarily more complex than the modern liberal approach. It does not propose definitive guidelines about how we should behave but instead proposes a different way of thinking about ethics, an approach that falls 'outside [modern] ethics'. In outlining this approach, Guess draws on the nineteenth and early twentieth-century Central European approach of standing outside mainstream ethics adopted by such thinkers as Hegel, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Adorno:

[6] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 3.
[7] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 7.

> Continental philosophers reject either one or the other (or both) of the two pillars of contemporary ethics. As far as the first pillar is concerned, they take one or another of a variety of weaker or stronger views. Thus, they cast doubt on the centrality of the ethical question, holding the weaker view that knowing 'What ought I to do?' is of distinctly subordinate importance in practical life, or that it is not a philosophically significant question. Alternatively, they hold the stronger view that it is actually a deep mistake or a failing to ask that question (at any rate, as a philosophical question). The second pillar of contemporary ethics is a kind of immanentism. Enlightenment 'Reason' is an immanent category; Heidegger's Angst and Hegel's Vernuft are not.[8]

Philosophers who fall outside ethics are concerned that modern ethics has become absorbed with reacting to that which is immediate. Asking 'What ought we to do?' in response to contemporary problems blinds individuals to other considerations. Similarly, the focus on reason forecloses contemplation of such non-immanent concepts as those mentioned above and, as I will expand on later in the thesis, Adorno's concept of promise.[9] An approach to suffering that falls outside ethics is more embedded in social and historical context, looking beyond the immediacy of present suffering to antecedent historical events and underlying deep structures. It also considers a much broader range of human motivation than the rational persuasion of modern ethics, including factors such as imagination, emotion, and culture that are more traditionally the province of art, psychoanalysis, and literature.[10]

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[8]Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 59-60. Geuss describes Hegel's *Vernuft* as a way of perceiving the world in which 'common sense, everyday rationality, the formal rationality of mathematics, and scientific rationality' are left behind, and other ways of knowing are explored (p. 52). Heidegger's *Angst* refers to 'the experience of extreme anxiety in the face of my own death that can bring me to see life and the world as a whole from an infinite distance, and to realise that everyday life is deranged and delusional because inherently constituted by a denial of this anxiety and what it reveals' (p. 58).

[9] Adorno's notion of promise is utopian hope in the possibility of absolute reconciliation, a negation of the bleak reality of modern life that points to something better to come.

[10] Scholars who fall 'outside (modern) ethics' come from a variety of theoretical backgrounds, including the early Frankfurt School of critical theory, poststructuralism, feminism, and psychoanalysis. A case might also be made for certain strands of classical realism as also falling outside ethics, because of their emphasis on a wider range of human motivation (as, for example, in the work of Hans Morgenthau and Carl Schmitt).

Geuss situates himself in the early Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory and has much in common with critical International Relations scholars. His critique of liberal ethics recalls Robert Cox's famous distinction between problem-solving and critical theory.[11] Cox borrowed the distinction from Max Horkheimer's essay 'Traditional and Critical Theory'.[12] He argues that problem-solving theory takes the world as it is and looks for ways of understanding and predicting patterns of social and institutional behaviour so as to better fix problems within the given order. In contrast, critical theory problematises the given order, taking into account how it came about and proposing strategic rather than tactical responses.[13] Like Geuss, Cox's critical theory emphasises social and historical awareness and contingency. However, he perceives the world from a neo-Gramscian tradition, which does not challenge problem-solving theory as fundamentally as the Frankfurt School.[14]

My approach, like Geuss's, falls broadly within the tradition of the early Frankfurt School.[15] The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research was established in 1923 with the purpose of being

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[11] Robert W. Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (1981), pp. 126-155.

[12] Horkheimer's essay was first published in the *Zeitschrift fur Sozial Forschung* (the journal of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, which he directed at the time) as 'Traditionelle und kritische theorie', *Zeitschrift fur Sozial Forschung* Vol. 6, No. 2 (1937), pp. 245-94. It is republished as 'Traditional and Critical Theory', in Craig Calhoun, Joseph Gerteis, James Moody, Steven Pfaff, and Indermohan Virk (eds.), *Classical Sociological Theory*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), pp. 304-318.

[13] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders'; Robert W. Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order: Social Forces in the Making of History*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

[14] Gramsci's project of socialist revolution challenged the class relations of capitalism but not the more fundamental structures of Enlightenment thought (instrumentalism, reason, progress) challenged by Adorno.

[15] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 9. Early critical theory has much to offer international political thought, but has been under-explored in International Relations, where the major critical theoretical influence is the (more liberal) Jürgen Habermas. See Chapter One of this thesis for an exposition of Habermasian international political thought.

an autonomous research institute, largely independent of the government and the academy. Three themes are central to its critical theory: modernity, epistemology, and emancipation. Critical theorists maintain that the Enlightenment project has been usurped by an obsession with instrumental rationality; 'progress' has brought new means of enslavement rather than the promised liberation. The Frankfurt School's concern with modernity has led to a rejection of traditional positivist assumptions. Positivists maintain that there is an objective reality that may be discovered through empirical means and fail to reflect upon or question established structures. In contrast, critical theorists maintain that theory is highly situated in social tradition and historical processes and do not accept the inevitability of the *status quo*. They utilise the method of immanent critique to address the shortcomings of the prevailing order, maintaining that it is impossible to critically assess established political and social structures with reference to an objective ethical framework or truth. Instead, they criticise the contemporary political order with reference to the guidelines set forth by its own laws, institutions, and embedded practices. Not content with questioning the prevailing order, however, critical theories pursue an 'emancipatory' agenda that promotes the transformation of the dominant system to redress its gross injustices.[16]

[16] This emancipatory agenda takes different forms in different critical theories. For Habermas, emancipation is a process of transcending systemic distortions of communication (for example, where consensus has been coerced) through a process of critical reflection and dialogue. For Adorno, in contrast, emancipation is less concretely achievable and points beyond the immediate and rational to the utopian hope that things might yet get better, keeping despair at bay in the midst of bleak reality. For a survey of the different emancipatory strategies conceived of by contemporary critical International Relations theorists, see Nicholas Rengger and Ben Thirkell-White (eds.), *Critical International Relations Theory After 25 Years* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

From this tradition, then, I argue that an abstract problem-solving orientation to ethical thought is problematic for four interrelated reasons. First, it neglects consideration of history and cultural context, abstracting from particularity and maintaining that in a 'neutral' situation general guidelines for behaviour are able to be reached. This ignores historical grievances and assumes that humanity starts from a place of equality.[17] Second, mainstream normative thought is built on a strong assumption of moral progress, an assumption that can lead to complacency and mask the continuation of more subtle forms of suffering. Third, it has a particular take on power and politics, where *politics* refers primarily to the day-to-day operation of state political systems, and it ignores the *political*, that is, the broad and deep production of social order. By focusing on the realm of politics, a mainstream approach ignores questions of systems and power and has limited tools for political change. Last, it shuts down alternative ways of thinking and acting outside the given political order. The focus on rationality forecloses contemplation of non-immanent concepts such as Adorno's notion of promise and Benjamin's utopianism: concepts that allow the imagining of a different world and, therefore, prevent us from sliding into despair. It also forecloses contemplation of the inner lives of individuals and communities; making discussion of emotions and trauma taboo and irrelevant to international politics.[18]

[17] Global justice theories that emphasise redistribution and reparations are less abstract than human rights based approaches in this regard, taking historical and social factors into account.

[18] This is changing, both at a grassroots level and in international political thought. Richard F. Mollica, psychiatrist and director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, notes that in the 1980s, he was denied an appointment with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees 'because he firmly believed that refugee did not have emotional problems or psychological distress associated with their displacement and homeless state'. See Richard F. Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds: Paths to Hope and Recovery in a Violent World* (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Books, 2006), p. 5. However, there is now widespread acknowledgement of the trauma that accompanies displacement and psychosocial programmes are commonplace (although this is often accompanied by a worrying depoliticisation—see Vanessa Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds: International Psychosocial Programs in Kosovo', *Alternatives*, Vol. 27, No. 4 (2002), pp. 489-511). For a

An Alternative Approach to Ethics

The second part of the thesis points to a different way of thinking about suffering in world politics, attempting to avoid the pitfalls of contemporary international ethics. To do this, I draw upon the thought of Theodor W. Adorno and Gillian Rose. Adorno became one of the Frankfurt School's most prominent intellectuals during the mid-twentieth century. His writings are notoriously complex and cover a wide range of subject matter: aesthetics, musicology, sociology, cultural studies, literature, and philosophy. He has come under criticism for having little to offer political thought or ethics; however his work is infused with ethical sensibility and a concern with suffering is central to his thought. I draw on Adorno's work to deepen my critique of modern ethics. He is deeply critical of the type of knowledge with which Enlightenment ideals are pursued, pointing to the dehumanisation and homogenisation that accompanies an obsession with instrumental rationality. He argues that the task of the critical intellectual is to preserve alternatives to the *status quo*, drawing attention to particular suffering as a counter to notions of inevitable progress, but also to the notion of promise as a counter to the distressing realities of modernity. Adorno was influential in the development of Gillian Rose's thought; indeed, his writings were the subject of her doctorate and first book. Rose's works have occasioned some attention in literary, sociological and historical circles but little, if any, attention in international political theory. She places brokenness and struggle at the centre of her thought, emphasising the need to acknowledge and work through human suffering alongside the need for political engagement.

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consideration of emotion in international thought, see Karin Fierke, 'Whereof We Can Speak, Thereof We Must Not Be Silent: Trauma, Political Solipsism and War', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 30, No. 4 (2004), pp. 471-491; and Neta Crawford, 'The Passions of World Politics: Propositions on Emotions and Emotional Relationships', *International Security*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (2001), pp. 116-56.

Both thinkers were profoundly influenced by their readings of Hegel, whose speculative dialectics offer a means of critiquing both Enlightenment and postmodern thought and point to a means of negotiating such binary opposites as particular and universal, finite and infinite.

Drawing on the work of both thinkers, but especially Rose, I propose a different way of thinking about suffering in international political thought, an approach I term 'speculative'.[19] I do not attempt to build an alternative ethics with concrete suggestions for change; instead, I offer a different way of responding to suffering, a way of thinking and being with political ramifications. Such a sensibility would lead international political thought in four different directions. First, it would hold together a consideration of particular and universal, reflection and action: listening to the stories of individuals and communities that are suffering, whilst also taking the risk of action on behalf of many in the pursuit of a 'good enough justice'.[20] Second, it would encourage a deeper knowledge of history and social context. It would look beyond the immediacy of present suffering to antecedent historical events and underlying deep structures. It would acknowledge the necessity of mourning and working through past traumas that restrict the exercise of political imagination and action. Third, it would acknowledge that the world is full of tragedy and that although moral progress is possible, it is

[19] My notion of speculative thought is drawn from Adorno and Rose's readings of Hegel and offers a way of negotiating binary opposites without privileging one category over the other. It insists both on attention to particular suffering and wider reflection on the broad social processes that facilitated that suffering. Speculative thought also has a non-immanent dimension that points to a utopian hope in future transformation. See Chapters Three and Four of this thesis for a discussion of Hegel's influence on the development of Adorno and Rose's thought. For a broadly similar reading of Hegel, see also Kimberly Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003), particularly Chapter Two: 'Philosophy as the Task of Comprehension'.
[20] Gillian Rose, *Love's Work* (London: Vintage, 1995), pp. 115-116.

also fragile and reversible.[21] However, alongside an awareness of persistent suffering under modernity, it would not dismiss the possibility of moral learning and thus abandon itself to despair, but instead dare to hope that 'we might yet succeed'.[22] Fourth, it would acknowledge that to engage politically is to take *risk*: there are no quick-fix solutions to the brokenness and sufferings of our modern world, and any action should be subject to evaluation and subsequent adjustment in the light of its inevitably unexpected consequences.

Brief Outline of Chapters

In Part One of the thesis, I point to the limitations of established mainstream and critical approaches to thinking about violence in suffering in International Relations. Chapter One traces the normative turn in International Relations theory, with a particular focus on global justice and human rights literature as the loudest moral voices in world politics. I argue that both approaches fall within a modern conception of ethics (in Geuss's terms) or problem-solving theory (in Cox's terms): they assume a particular type of knowledge of the world, and seek to articulate a universally applicable set of moral demands that would create an idealised future. The normative turn is motivated by human suffering, but attention to suffering is lost in the attempt to prescribe rational guidelines for a better world. It is also predicated on a strong assumption of moral progress, which overestimates the ease of creating positive change and encourages complacency in the knowledge that something is being done. Such an

[21] For a non-emancipatory critique of moral progress, see Nicholas Rengger on the anti-Pelagian stance which '[does] not believe that there is a man-made short cut to heaven and [maintains] that the beginning of political wisdom is to see this and accept it' (Rengger, 'Tragedy or Skepticism?', p. 326).

[22] Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', in Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 68.

approach is short-sighted and limited, neglecting consideration of past and present suffering and the historical and structural processes that facilitated the suffering.

Disaffection with the normative turn in International Relations has encouraged a number of international political theorists to challenge the *status quo* from broadly critical traditions such as the Frankfurt School of critical theory and poststructuralism. In Chapter Two, I trace the way in which these traditions think about violence and suffering in global politics. The first part of the chapter focuses on the thought of second and third generation political theorists in the tradition of the Frankfurt School: Jürgen Habermas, Andrew Linklater, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser. I argue that although these thinkers question many of the assumptions of contemporary ethical thought and acknowledge the ambiguities of modernity, the limitations of problem-solving theory remain, albeit to a lesser extent. They continue to be wedded to a strong version of moral progress, the pursuit of emancipation through widening dialogic communities encourages an emphasis on procedure and rational decision-making, and the attempt to delineate conditions for a better future precludes attention to past and present horrors, which may make rational discussion difficult or even impossible.[23] The second part of the chapter examines and critiques poststructural international political thought, drawing in particular on the work of Jenny Edkins, David Campbell and Vivienne Jabri. These theorists have a greater sensitivity to human suffering and the fragility of moral progress under modernity and provide a more convincing critique of mainstream ethics. However, in

[23] One of the markers of trauma is that traumatic experiences are unable to be assimilated into already-existing categories; they are too far outside the normal realm of experience. As a result, it takes time and work in order to reconstruct the traumatic experience, and its retelling is often accompanied by altered emotional, psychological, and physical states that make rational argumentation of the sort advocated by Habermasian theorists an extraordinarily difficult task.

dismantling established hierarchies such as public and private, universal and particular, identity and difference, there is a tendency for poststructural thought to overemphasise the formerly neglected side of the pair. This can lead to a focus on personal experiences of suffering and mourning to the detriment of public and institutional experiences and means of working through.

In Part Two of the thesis, I turn from the exposition and critique of established normative and critical literatures in International Relations to the articulation of a different way of thinking about violence and suffering in world politics. I advocate a reinvigoration of critical theory in the tradition of the early Frankfurt School, drawing on the work of Adorno and Rose. These thinkers fall outside the modern conception of ethics, yet hold fast to Enlightenment ideals. They are profoundly influenced by a negative dialectical (Adorno) and speculative (Rose) reading of Hegel, which insists that understanding must be socially and historically situated and offers a means of negotiating binary opposites. A critical theory in this tradition rejects a strong conception of moral progress, but does not reject the notion of progress entirely, recognising its fragility whilst holding fast to its possibility. It draws attention to particular suffering, but encourages public forms of working through alongside the private. It encourages giving voice to suffering, both as part of the process of bearing witness to hidden atrocities and injustice and in order to encourage critical reflection on the structures and practices that facilitated them.

In Chapter Three, I deepen my critique of liberal ethics through a discussion of Adorno's writings on suffering and hope. Adorno is critical of the instrumental rationality of

Enlightenment thought, which abstracts from particular experiences and leaves little room for imagining an alternative world. He draws attention to suffering in its raw, bodily form, reintroducing a humanity that he perceives as lacking in modernity. He also points to an unformed, utopian hope of a better world than that offered by modernity; a promise that he sees glimpses of but that remains essentially negative,[24] leaving his insights as a 'message in a bottle for future generations'.[25] In Chapter Four, I turn to Rose, who takes up this message and fleshes out a way of being in the world that moves forward from a negative Adornian position without prescribing a blueprint for action. Her two-fold response to what she terms 'the disasters of modernity'[26] is one of mourning and political risk. First, we must mourn the actual and existential traumas of modernity,[27] where mourning involves the critical remembering of the past, expression of pain, and self-examination. Rose warns that if traumas are not worked through, it can have political consequences as those who have suffered experience 'resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions'.[28] As well as looking to past traumas as a key to understanding the present, we must also take the risk of acting politically. Political action is undertaken realising that this life is inherently flawed and that any attempt to heal the present will at best only partially succeed. However, we have a responsibility to stay with the brokenness of the

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[24] Adorno's notion of promise is negative in the sense of not putting forth a positive description of what an ideal world might look like. It points to the *non-identical*: that which cannot be subsumed into known categories or concepts, and in doing so, offers a critique of society that refuses to confirm or reproduce what is criticised.
[25] This quote appears to be apocryphal.
[26] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 120.
[27] A note on agency: Rose's notion of mourning operates on a number of levels, but is primarily a communal one that operates at state and civil societal levels. See Howard Caygill, 'The Broken Hegel: Gillian Rose's Retrieval of Speculative Philosophy', *Women: A Cultural Review*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (1998), pp. 19-27.
[28] Gillian Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 51.

present and to engage with it: attempting to move forward, making mistakes, learning from them, and trying again.

In the final two chapters of the thesis, I apply the insights gained from Adorno and Rose's thought to international political theory. In Chapter Five, I apply Rose's twofold response of mourning and political risk to the experience of trauma in global politics. I focus on the experience of trauma, in part because trauma is inextricably linked with violence, the traditional preoccupation of International Relations. Trauma is very often caused by violent events, and, unless properly worked through, can prompt further violence in efforts to establish security or to wreak revenge. Trauma also points to the cracks in modernity, providing an opportunity for critical reflection and re-evaluation. According to Adorno, pain 'tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different'.[29] If we fail to give voice to suffering, we miss opportunities to reflect upon how it came about and how things might be different. Thus, any response to the brokenness of modernity needs to have consideration of violence and trauma at its core. In the Conclusion, I revisit the limitations of liberal and poststructural ethics and show how a speculative approach, drawn from the writings of Adorno and Rose, addresses these limitations and offers a different analysis of and response to suffering in global politics. I then gesture towards two other applications of this approach: first, exploring the ways in which it speaks to the issue of displaced persons and asylum seekers, and second, broadening the discussion beyond concrete disasters of modernity to a more general enlightening of Enlightenment through (childhood) education.

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[29] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 203.

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE NORMATIVE TURN IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The normative turn in global politics emerged in response to the worst excesses of modernity: human rights were enshrined in international law after the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust;[1] global justice debates (re)emerged in the wake of leftist political uprisings in protest against the follies of Cold War hubris.[2] Both were practical attempts to 'do something' to fix problems that were becoming progressively more difficult to ignore in an increasingly globalised

[1] See, for example, Jack Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice,* 2nd ed. (New York: Cornell University Press, 2003); Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler (eds.), *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999); David P. Forsythe, *Human Rights and World Politics,* 2nd ed. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*; Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998); William Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (Hampshire: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1998); Austin Sarat and Thomas R. Kearns (eds.), *Human Rights: Concepts, Contests, Contingencies* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 2001); Henry Shue, *Basic Rights: Subsistence, Affluence, and U. S. Foreign Policy*, 2nd edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); Raymond John Vincent, *Human Rights and International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Jeremy Waldron, *Liberal Rights: collected papers 1981-1991* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[2] Global justice debates have a long, but often neglected history: Charles Beitz cites David Hume, Adam Smith, Henry Sidgwick and John Stuart Mill as among those who considered the morality of global issues such as foreign trade, immigration, and imperialism. See Charles Beitz, 'Cosmopolitanism and Global Justice', *The Journal of Ethics*, Vol. 9, No. 1-2 (2005), pp. 11-27. See also Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979, 2nd ed., 1999); Charles Beitz, 'Social and Cosmopolitan Liberalism', *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 3 (1999), pp. 515-529; Thomas Pogge, 'Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties', *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 19, No. 1 (2005), pp. 55-83; Thomas Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002); John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1999); Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: First Anchor Books, 1999); Peter Singer, *One World: The Ethics of Globalization* (London: Yale University Press, 2002).

world and this practical turn fed into, and was supported by, a normative turn in international political theory. Such issues had not previously been at the forefront of debate among International Relations theorists or political decision-makers, who instead focused primarily on security and perceived the international system as comprised of states whose leaders were uniquely responsible for the well-being of their citizens. The normative turn has thus widened the range of issues that are considered worthy of debate in the International Relations canon, and has brought some interesting perspectives to bear on them.

The normative impetus is to be applauded; the persistence of suffering in global politics calls for reflection and response from international political theorists. However, the solutions proposed by cosmopolitan and human rights theorists are inherently limited because of their subscription to a particular liberal vision of global politics. They are both part of a rationalist tradition that focuses primarily on moral arguments and technical solutions to problems without fully considering their political dimensions. As such, they do not pay enough attention to how the problems came about in historical and structural terms or to political responses.[3] They thus fall into what Robert Cox famously describes as 'problem-solving theory' rather than 'critical theory'.[4] In terms of political practice, the normative turn has supported foreign aid and humanitarian interventions in the name of global justice and human rights; however, a neglect of

[3] Although, as we shall see, this is true to varying degrees. For example, Thomas Pogge is a cosmopolitan thinker who emphasises both global economic structures and historical processes in his argument that we (in the affluent West) have a negative duty to redress global inequality. Nonetheless, the solutions he proffers are aimed at elite decision-makers, and he relies on rational argumentation to prompt moral change. See Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*; Pogge, 'Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties'.
[4] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders'.

the political dimension of such interventions obscures the danger that these 'can subvert what they claim to secure'.[5]

In this chapter, I draw on the tradition of the early Frankfurt School of critical theory to point to key limitations of the normative (liberal) project in International Relations. I do not attempt a thorough critique of particular theories of global justice or human rights. Instead, I point to some of the fundamental limitations of liberal ways of knowing, maintaining that the rational, forward-looking focus on what ought to be done to address contemporary problems is restrictive and limits our understanding of how those problems came about and how we might respond. To do this, I adopt Geuss's useful distinction between modern ethics and that which falls 'outside ethics', and maintain that the social turn in International Relations has led to theorising that predominantly falls within the problem-solving, normative approach of modern ethics. Despite considerable variation between thinkers, the emphasis on instrumental rationality and abstract generalities is pervasive and deeply rooted.[6]

I begin by recapping Geuss's characterisation of modern ethics (or problem-solving theory) and point to Rawlsian liberal theory and cosmopolitan ethics as exemplifying this approach. John Rawls placed justice at the heart of liberal political thought; his approach was then globalised by such thinkers as Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge, giving birth to a modern cosmopolitan

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[5] See, for example, Geoffrey Hawthorn, 'Liberalism since the Cold War: an Enemy to Itself?', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 25, S1 (1999), p. 148.

[6] There are many strands of cosmopolitan international thought and human rights discourse, and these exhibit the traits of problem-solving theory to varying degrees. However, I do not have space to deal with the variety of thought in this chapter; my purpose is rather to point out the clear commonalities that exist between the different conceptions of international ethics.

liberalism. Contemporary human rights discourse draws upon both Rawlsian and cosmopolitan liberalism,[7] and falls with them into Guess's characterisation of contemporary ethics. Cosmopolitan liberalism and human rights are the two loudest ethical voices in International Relations; although they have different intellectual and practical roots, they both emerge as normative responses to real-world problems and seek practical solutions to global problems in an effort to prevent past and present atrocities from recurring. Drawing upon these discourses, I demonstrate the pervasiveness of problem-solving characteristics in contemporary international ethics. I argue that they prescribe technical remedies for political problems and that, in rushing towards solutions, they ignore both historical and structural antecedents and the stories of those who suffer most. This is problematic because it encourages complacency in the knowledge that something is being done, buying into liberal notions of inevitable moral progress under modernity, and discourages *political* action that challenges the *status quo*.

Geuss and Modern Ethical Thought

The normative turn in international political thought has common roots with a broader shift towards problem-solving in modern ethical thought. Geuss helpfully characterises modern philosophical ethics as essentially organised around the debating of the question 'What ought we to do?' in response to the ills of modernity. During the medieval Christian period this question

[7] Human rights discourse employs the language of cosmopolitan liberalism, but relies on states protecting their citizens' rights, and thus effectively depends on a state-centric, Rawlsian liberalism. Since the end of the Cold War, however, human rights have been used to justify (military) interventions in the name of humanity, arguing that states give up their right to sovereignty when they systematically abuse the rights of their own citizens.

was asked and answered in a theocentric framework; since abandoning the Christian worldview, Western philosophy has taken on the mantle of providing answers. The 'ought' in 'What ought we to do?' is a narrow, rational ought; it seeks 'useful' knowledge from which to prescribe universal moral guidelines and aspires to motivate change in behaviour by virtue of rational persuasion. Philosophical ethics in this sense has become a pervasive aspect of modern life:

> With secularisation the ethical realm is construed not merely as freestanding, but also in some sense all-encompassing: I can and must ask the basic ethical question in *any* context in which I find myself in which action might be called for; no domain stands outside the scope of ethics.[8]

As discussed earlier, this central ethical question is what Geuss terms the first pillar of contemporary ethics. The second pillar is the loss of a reference to God, which was central to the Christian conception of ethics, or indeed anything outside observable experience—in critical theoretical terminology, immanentism. Although the specific replacement remains a source of debate, 'reason' is a leading candidate.[9] The remainder of this chapter expands and deepens Geuss's characterisation of modern ethics with reference to contemporary international thought as exemplifying problem-solving theory and points to some of the limitations of this approach.

Modern Ethics: From the Domestic to the International

Modern ethics draws heavily on liberal political theory and approaches to political life, and particularly on a Rawlsian-influenced liberalism with notions of justice at its heart. Rawls's

[8] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 45.
[9] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 44.

project is essentially a 'remoralization of political philosophy', whereby ethical considerations are placed at the centre of a liberal conception of politics, and political theory essentially becomes 'applied ethics'.[10]

Rawls draws on Kantian ethics and revises the face of liberalism in two primary ways: justice is viewed as a key liberal tenet, and moral principles are reintroduced to political philosophy. These moves are a major departure from classical liberalism;[11] early liberals viewed Kant as anti-liberal and were suspicious both of his contention that there are universal principles ('the concept of the *a priori*') and his positive conception of freedom, which places reason at its core.[12] Kant's elucidation of a *normative* political philosophy was anathema to early liberals and at the root of much contemporary disaffection with liberalism:

> The pure normative standpoint that Kant's ethics tries to occupy, a standpoint in which we consider only the normatively relevant features of a possible world, abstracting strictly from the real world and the empirical accidents of concrete situations, is an expression of what Dewey called 'the quest for certainty.' In an insecure world, weak humans struggle convulsively to reach some kind of stability; the a priori is an overcompensation in thought for experienced human weakness.[13]

Kant's abstraction from the real world in order to find a 'pure normative standpoint', and thus provide certain guidance in an uncertain, contingent world, is mimicked by Rawls in *A Theory of*

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[10] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 16.
[11] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 11-28. Geuss characterises classical liberalism, which emerged during the nineteenth century, as a 'negative phenomenon', more defined by what it stood in opposition to than by what it stood for in any positive sense. Classical liberalism opposed two prevailing tendencies of the time: the idea that the state had a duty to care comprehensively for its citizens and the 'exaggerated moralization of politics' (p. 13).
[12] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 16-17.
[13] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 20-21.

Justice.[14] In this seminal work, Rawls describes (at length) the social arrangements that he believes would be reached by rational individuals placed in an 'original position' operating behind a 'veil of ignorance', whereby they are unaware of their position in society, their personal characteristics, or their conception of the good, and where 'each is forced to choose for all'.[15] He aims to 'generalize and carry to a higher order of abstraction the traditional doctrine of the social contract' and in so doing, determine the key features of a non-utilitarian account of justice he termed 'justice as fairness'.[16] He outlines a 'difference principle' to guide national economic orders, stating that 'the social order is not to establish and secure the more attractive prospects of those better off unless doing so is to the advantage of those less fortunate'.[17]

Rawls's project prescribes technical solutions to problems of injustice through a remarkable feat of abstraction: a thought experiment whereby individuals are stripped of all facets of their identity and asked to come to a consensus about the best social arrangements for all who reside in a particular community. Geuss challenges Rawls's project on two counts, asking why he believed consensus to be possible in the first instance, and, secondly, why any decision made in the original position should have any relevance to the world in which we live. He argues that '[t]he theory purports to be pure of contamination by the facts of history, psychology, economics sociology, and political science, but it is highly questionable whether we can have a useful practical philosophy, or even a useful set of normative rules, without such grounded

[14] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971/1999).
[15] Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, p. 121.
[16] John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993/1996), p. xvii.
[17] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. 65.

understanding'.[18] In a similar vein, Benhabib maintains that Rawlsian liberalism silences the 'concrete other':

> [T]he Kantian presuppositions…guiding the Rawlsian theory are so weighty that the equivalence of all selves qua rational agents dominates and stifles any serious acknowledgment of difference, alterity and of the standpoint of the 'concrete other'…Neither the concreteness nor the otherness of the 'concrete other' can be known in the absence of the *voice* of the other.[19]

She maintains that although Rawls undoubtedly had genuine concern for individual well-being, there is no room for consideration of 'otherness' in his theory. On the contrary, individuality is stifled as the desire for universality and generality results in abstraction from particularity and historicity.

Rawls's notion of justice as fairness attracted a great deal of criticism for failing to account for those subjects that fell outside his conception of a homogenous, liberal subject. In *Political Liberalism*, Rawls revises his earlier conception of a just society, answering his critics by acknowledging the difficulty of realising a 'well-ordered society of justice as fairness'.[20] Instead, he argues for a *political* conception of justice that allows a 'reasonable' plurality of moral, religious, and philosophical claims within a form of liberalism determined by broad, overlapping consensus. He argues that a central goal is to ensure a 'just basic structure' and that 'adjustments are continually required' to maintain this.[21] However, his approach remains ungrounded in an understanding of those individuals who make up particular communities, their

[18] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 33.
[19] Seyla Benhabib, *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), pp. 167-168.
[20] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, p. xix.
[21] Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, pp. 281-285.

histories, and their relationships, and it assumes rather than defends liberalism as the best political arrangement. In *The Law of Peoples*, he extends his approach to the international sphere, but rejects the idea that the difference principle should apply internationally. Instead, he maintains that domestic societies must take responsibility for their own people and that the responsibility of the international community is primarily to ensure the background conditions in which domestic societies are able to flourish. As such, he proposes an international duty of assistance with a much lower threshold: to enable poor societies to achieve liberal institutions and political autonomy.[22]

Rawls's writings on justice prompted a cascade of philosophical and political theorising in which ethical considerations were placed centre-stage. Partially in response to *A Theory of Justice*, boundaries between political theory and International Relations started to dissolve, and international political theory became a recognised area of thought. International political theory is a relatively new development: in the early years of the discipline of International Relations, there were few voices calling for moral or political theorising; political theory and International Relations were distinct areas of study that had little to say to one another. Nicholas Rengger points to a crucial shift in international political thought in the 1970s, prompted by debates surrounding the Vietnam War and by the publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971.[23] However, these debates shifted the development of international political thought in a particular direction: one marked by its emphasis on problem-solving and justice. Where there had been a paucity of theory, theory became influential, but it was almost exclusively what Rengger terms

[22] Rawls, *The Law of Peoples*, pp. 116-120.
[23] Nicholas J. Rengger, 'Political Theory and International Relations: Promised Land or Exit from Eden?', *International Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 4 (2000), pp. 755-770.

'hyperrationalist' theory of a particular orientation: 'seduced by the lure of thinking that it can "help"' and wielding 'useful knowledge' in order to do so.[24]

Cosmopolitan political theory was at the forefront of the evolution of international political theory. In International Relations, important crossover works such as Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars*[25] and Charles Beitz's *Political Theory and International Relations*[26] kick-started international political thought as we know it today and established its problem-solving orientation in response to contemporary debates. Beitz's work in particular was influential in creating a space for a normative theory of International Relations; he brought the international to the forefront of political theory and was the first theorist in modern times explicitly to espouse a 'cosmopolitan' international political theory. He was also the first to make global poverty an issue deserving of attention by international theorists generally obsessed by questions of war and peace. The 'and' in *Political Theory and International Relations* (*PTIR*)—the idea that the two spheres of thought might have something to say to each other—was a revelation and enormously influential in the birth of international political thought as we now know it.[27]

Cosmopolitan political theory and global justice literatures have proliferated over the decades and very often act as agenda-setters within the discipline of International Relations.[28] However,

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[24] Rengger, 'Political Theory and International Relations', p. 769.

[25] Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 1977, 2nd ed. 1992, 3rd ed. 2000).

[26] Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*.

[27] See the 'Forum on Charles Beitz' in *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), pp. 361-423. In 'The House that Chuck Built: Twenty-five Years of Reading Charles Beitz' (pp. 371-379), Chris Brown maintains that '*PTIR* was genuinely innovatory; it introduced a new way of looking at some old problems in international relations and applied some older ways of thought to examining some new problems…[*PTIR*] was the first general study of the field, and the questions it addressed remain on the front burner' (p. 371).

[28] Rengger, 'Political Theory and International Relations', p. 763.

if one looks more broadly at the world of international *politics*, the loudest ethical voice continues to be that of human rights. Human rights discourse employs the language of cosmopolitan political theory: the two approaches to international ethics have much in common, despite their different intellectual and practical roots. In particular, both approaches are 'hyperrationalist' and problem-solving in orientation: oriented toward justice and to the abstract bestowal of rights upon individuals. They are also based upon a strong assumption of moral learning, believing both that there is clear evidence of progress under modernity and that progress will continue to take place. Both approaches have also provided theoretical justification for practical responses to suffering in global politics, particularly in the post-Cold War world where the demand to 'do something' has grown louder.[29] In what follows, I demonstrate the pervasiveness of these characteristics, and outline some of their limitations as the dominant forms of ethical thought in International Relations theory.

Limitations of Modern International Ethics

In this section, I point to the strong commonalities between cosmopolitan political theory and liberal human rights discourse. Both approaches exhibit the core characteristics of modern ethical thought pointed to by Geuss—an emphasis on problem-solving and immanency—and

[29] Global justice and human rights theories, and their common liberal cosmopolitan roots, have provided a theoretical underpinning for humanitarian interventions in the post-Cold War world, including famine relief, conflict management, and peace-building. See, for example, Jenny Edkins, 'Legality with a Vengeance: Famines and Humanitarian Relief in 'Complex Emergencies'', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (1996), pp. 547-575; Hawthorn, 'Liberalism Since the Cold War'; and Richard Devetak, 'Between Kant and Pufendorf: Humanitarian Intervention, Statist Anti-cosmopolitanism and Critical International Theory', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33, S1 (2007), pp. 151-174.

assume a strong version of moral learning. Beitz, Pogge, and Peter Singer all advocate a liberal cosmopolitan approach to the problem of global poverty, maintaining that we must extend the concept of justice beyond traditional state boundaries, prioritising the individual as the subject of justice. Each thinker proposes some sort of redistribution of wealth, either through an extension of something like the Rawlsian difference principle internationally (Beitz and Pogge) or through personal donations to charity (Singer).[30] Human rights discourse also uses the language of liberal cosmopolitanism, but focuses primarily on violations of the person and political oppression rather than poverty, enshrining guidelines in international law and treaties that bestow rights upon individuals by virtue of their humanity.

These approaches to global suffering share four problematic characteristics (to a greater or lesser degree). First, they privilege a rational, problem-solving approach to politics, with a focus on elite decision-making and technical solutions to suffering. Second, they are based on a strong assumption of moral progress: believing both that progress is possible, and that individuals, communities, and global leaders are willing to work towards it. Third, they largely neglect consideration of history and social context, generating guidelines for living that focus on the future with little redress for past wrongs. Finally, they disregard the motivational force of such non-immanent concepts as promise or utopianism and refuse to take the inner lives of individuals and communities into account. I consider these four themes in turn.

[30] Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*; Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*; Singer, *One World*.

Rational and problem-solving

Global justice and human rights discourses privilege a particular way of knowing about the world and propose technical and legal solutions to 'fix' the problems of repression and global inequality. The problem-solving orientation of human rights has been central since its inception. The human rights regime developed as a reaction to the carnage of World War II, when citizens had no legal justification for disobeying state orders that they thought to be morally wrong.[31] International human rights law was established to provide the normative guidelines that the international system lacked, thus empowering citizens to challenge oppressive practices. Cosmopolitan thinkers propose technical solutions by which global poverty might be addressed and rely on moral reasoning and persuasion to advocate their positions. Beitz argues for an extension of Rawls's difference principle internationally, maintaining that it is no longer tenable to privilege the state in the light of increasing interdependence. Pogge constructs a complex causal argument that makes the case that the affluent West is responsible for countless deaths every day and thus has a negative duty to redress global inequality.[32] Singer maintains that because we in the affluent West could do much to relieve global poverty at little cost to ourselves, it is 'serious moral failure' if we do not.[33] As such, all three fall within the category of rationalist, problem-solving theory, exhibiting those characteristics of modern ethics outlined by Geuss.

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[31] Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*, pp. 4-5.
[32] Pogge, 'Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties'.
[33] Peter Singer, ''What Should a Billionaire Give – and What Should You?', *New York Times Magazine* (December 17, 2006). This article can be accessed online: see http://www.nytimes.com/2006/12/17/magazine/17charity.t.html (last accessed 11 March, 2008).

Beitz's ground-breaking *Political Theory and International Relations* uses moral reasoning to propose a radical shift in the way that political theorists formulate questions of justice. It is comprised of three interlinking essays. In 'International Relations as a State of Nature', Beitz criticises international scepticism, or political realism, which he characterises as holding a Hobbesian view of the international system as a state of nature, where normative standards do not apply to states and it is irrational to constrain behaviour out of regard for the interest of others. In 'The Autonomy of States', he criticises the chief alternative to international scepticism: the morality of states, or Rawlsian social liberalism, where states have the primary responsibility for the well-being of their people. Beitz argues that both realism and social liberalism are untenable in the light of increasing interdependence of global actors, where norms, institutions, and practices exist that apply to people largely without consent and materially influence their well-being. A more satisfactory theory of international relations would privilege *individuals* as actors: a moral cosmopolitan liberalism. Following the logic of his first two essays, in 'International Distributive Justice', Beitz delineates a cosmopolitan theory of justice. He draws upon Rawls's ideas as put forth in *A Theory of Justice* and argues that to be consistent, Rawls's notions of justice should apply not only to relations within states, but also to relations globally: 'it is wrong to limit the application of contractarian principles of social justice to the nation-state; instead, these principles ought to apply globally'.[34] International interactions create both benefits and burdens for individuals that would not be present otherwise. As such, interactions should be guided by a principle of distributive justice; this principle is most appropriately a global form of Rawls's difference principle selected by a hypothetical-contract argument. However, he translates Rawls's arguments on to the international system without first

[34] Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*, p. 128.

justifying Rawls's arguments, taking the difference principle to an even higher level of abstraction in order to address inequality.

Pogge also relies on rational argument to persuade the affluent West of its duty to alleviate global poverty.[35] He maintains that we are implicated in the suffering of countless millions and thus have a *negative* duty to make changes that will alleviate global poverty.[36] He argues that the interconnectedness of institutional regimes means that lives are deeply influenced by non-domestic structures and that the present global economic order is unethical because of its role in perpetuating inequality. Citizens of affluent nations bear some responsibility for upholding this unjust system, through, for example, unfair trade rules and the international arms trade. He maintains that by upholding this coercive regime without actively working for its reform or compensating those it harms, we are partly responsible for the inequality it engenders. Like Beitz, he points to the unacceptability of Rawls's double standard for national and international orders, saying: 'we owe the global poor an account of why we take ourselves to be entitled to impose on them a global economic order in violation of the minimal moral constraints we ourselves place on the imposition of any national economic order'.[37] Pogge advocates an institutional understanding of justice, claiming that we have a duty not to uphold a coercive institutional order that avoidably restricts access to basic necessities for some human beings. He maintains that structural changes are needed to address the poverty and inequality that so often engender human rights abuses. One of the reforms he suggests is the instigation of a Global Resources Dividend (GRD) to improve the capacity of the global poor. The GRD is based on the

[35] Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*.
[36] Pogge, 'Severe Poverty as a Violation of Negative Duties'.
[37] Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*, p. 109.

notion that all peoples are entitled to a share in limited resources, and thus to a small proportion of their value if governments decide to make use of or sell them. Pogge's proposal for reform based on this injustice is modest: he suggests shifting one per cent of global income to a fund which would be used to equip the global poor to meet their own needs.[38]

Singer also argues that citizens in the developed world have a moral duty to address problems of global injustice. He proposes a solution that bypasses political processes; instead, he puts the onus on individuals to donate to charity. Unlike Beitz and Pogge, he does not ground his claims in political theory; he uses counterfactual and utilitarian reasoning to persuade. For example, he tells the story of a professor coming across a child drowning in a pond whilst on his way to give a lecture. He has a choice. He could wade in and save her, muddying himself in the process and making himself late for class, or he could leave her to drown, enabling himself to arrive at the lecture tidy and on time. Singer maintains that just as it would be morally wrong for the professor to leave the child to drown, so is it wrong for those of us from affluent nations to spend all our disposable income on luxury when people are dying of starvation. Given our ability to help those living in extreme poverty at no noticeable cost to ourselves, it is morally incumbent upon us to do so.[39] Singer's argument is thus that we have a positive duty of assistance: a duty to help those in need. Singer's approach to global justice is simple: it does not require any action on the part of states or consideration of global structures. He recommends that those of us living in the affluent West should donate substantial amounts to charities such as Oxfam and UNICEF

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[38] Pogge, *World Politics and Human Rights*, pp. 196-215

[39] This story was first published in Singer's influential article entitled 'Famine, Affluence and Morality', *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (1972), pp. 229-243. Revised version available online at http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/1972----.htm (last accessed March 11, 2008). See also Singer, *One World*, pp. 156-157.

that are devoted to addressing poverty in the developing world. The amount donated would ideally be everything over and above that needed for the necessities of life, but maintains that if 'comfortably off' Americans gave just 10 per cent he would not 'chastise them', given that they would be doing much more than their fellow citizens.[40]

All three prominent cosmopolitan theorists—Beitz, Pogge, and Singer—rely on rational argument and persuasion to motivate agents to 'do something' to alleviate poverty. Beitz does so in a conversation with Rawls, ignoring such nuanced moral alternatives as classical realism or critical theory. As Chris Brown aptly remarks, 'Beitz addresses [the issue of global justice] as a conversation amongst cosmopolitan liberals and, inevitably, produces a cosmopolitan, liberal solution'.[41] Pogge and Singer also propose liberal, technical solutions with which to address the problem: Pogge targets intergovernmental leaders with a proposal for a tax to help the global poor; Singer targets comfortably-off individuals and challenges them to donate a substantial proportion of their income to charities that deal with poverty. As such, all three share characteristics of problem-solving theory, depending on logical persuasion and forward-looking solutions to alleviate global suffering.

The human rights regime also falls squarely within the rubric of contemporary ethics as defined by Geuss: it provides guidelines for the question of what we ought to do in response to rights violations, and it is based upon a secular conception of human nature. Human rights are

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[40] Peter Singer, 'The Singer Solution to World Poverty', *New York Times Magazine* (September 5, 1999), pp. 60-63. This article can be accessed online: http://www.utilitarian.net/singer/by/19990905.htm (last accessed May 11, 2007).

[41] Brown, 'The House that Chuck Built', p. 378.

generally understood and defended as an empowering discourse that is instrumental in improving individuals' lives.[42] Throughout its lifespan, the rights regime—comprised of generally accepted principles of human rights, norms expressed in international law, formal procedures in the UN, and civil societal mechanisms used to influence change—has been utilised to respond to human rights violations that take place in such varying arenas as conflict zones, prisons, and the workplace. Like much of contemporary ethics, the human rights regime draws heavily on a Kantian liberalism, prescribing normative guidelines that are codified in law and defended as universal. It is a guide to action, operating as a safety net that has the goal of providing redress for the worst excesses of humanity.[43]

Although there has been much debate about how we might ground the human rights regime, Michael Ignatieff defends its instrumental, rational nature with reference to the divisive potential of foundational claims, saying: 'Far better…to forgo these kinds of foundational arguments altogether and seek to build support for human rights on the basis of what such rights actually *do* for human beings'.[44] However, echoing Benhabib's critique of justice-focused cosmopolitanism, human rights inevitably remain abstract and distanced from concrete historical situations.[45] Jay Bernstein argues that a universalist, rights-based approach to morality is not only limited, but actively hinders individual well-being, saying 'rights are…forms of misrecognition and injury

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[42] Ignatieff, *Human Rights,* pp. 20-21, 54-55; Anthony J. Langlois, 'Human Rights and Modern Liberalism: A Critique', *Political Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 3 (2003), p. 521. Where foundational claims are made, these are generally to do with the 'moral vision of human nature' and a general consensus on human value. See, for example, Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*, pp. 14-19.
[43] Waldron, *Liberal Rights*, pp. 370-391.
[44] Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, p. 54.
[45] Kate Schick, 'Beyond Rules: A Critique of the Liberal Human Rights Regime', *International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2006), pp. 345-351.

since they presuppose mutual indifference, formalize that indifference, and abstract from particularity'.[46] He notes that a liberal approach to ethics does not include the *political* in any substantive way—he describes it as the 'instrumentalization of the political'[47]—and thus is unable to live up to its promise.[48]

The central ethical question—what ought we to do?—provides the *raison d'être* and organising force for the human rights regime and for global justice debates. These responses to active and structural violence are motivated by pervasive global suffering and it would be wrong to suggest that they have had no positive impact on the international stage. On the contrary, liberal cosmopolitanism has a grassroots element that has empowered individuals and communities to fight for change:

> When liberalism sheds its metaphysical orientation it comes to be recognized as a distinct historical project…While there is much in liberal thought that relies on a Kantian metaphysics, from Rawls's *Theory of Justice* to its cosmopolitan articulation in Beitz and others, it is hence entirely wrong to suggest that all liberal thought is devoid of a conception of the struggles and contestations that have come to define a distinctly liberal understanding of modern political subjectivity and the social formations emergent from a distinct historical era.[49]

Thus, while human rights and global justice literatures in international political thought abstract from human suffering, and propose legal and technical solutions in order to relieve the ills of

[46]Jay M. Bernstein, 'Suffering Injustice: Misrecognition as Moral Injury in Critical Theory', *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2005), p. 317.
[47] Bernstein, 'Suffering Injustice', p. 304.
[48] The political concerns the broad and deep production of social order, as opposed to the more easily observable activities and institutions of *politics*. For an excellent summary of the difference between the political and politics, see Jenny Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations: Bringing the Political Back In* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999), pp. 2-6.
[49] Vivienne Jabri, 'Solidarity and Spheres of Culture: The Cosmopolitan and the Postcolonial', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (2007), p. 719.

modernity, they have also been appropriated by political movements and used to fight for change. However, as an approach within international political thought, liberal cosmopolitanism remains limited by its restrictive forward-looking, problem-solving approach and provides theoretical justification for elite governmental and non-governmental responses to suffering that rely heavily on rational knowledge and expert counsel.[50]

Assumes moral progress

Both cosmopolitan political theory and human rights discourse rest on a central plank of moral progress. The notion of moral learning is rarely defended; it is a core liberal assumption that is taken for granted as being true. This is one of the major departures of liberalism from political realism, which sees such progress as tenuous and reversible. However, there are problems with a strong conviction in moral progress. It encourages thinkers to view the world through a lens that highlights evidence of their conviction and conceals evidence to the contrary. It also encourages misplaced complacency. This is particularly the case for human rights discourse, where the codification of rules and the spread of human rights talk and norms are taken as evidence of progress. The notion of human rights has achieved great prevalence since the publication in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, not only in academia, but also in

[50] For example, in 'Legality with a Vengeance', Edkins discusses the heavy reliance in theory and practice on technical solutions to relieve famine. She focuses particularly on Amartya Sen's writings on the link between famine and conflict. Sen argues that famines are not caused by food shortages and therefore cannot be addressed through food aid; instead, famines signal economic collapse and are linked to conflict and violence. However, despite the increased complexity of Sen's analysis, it too suggests technical solutions including early warning systems and public welfare and Edkins argues that there is a poverty of the political in such responses. By designating famines 'problems' that can be solved by the instigation of knowledge-driven programmes, such an approach distracts from deeper reflection on the ways in which the international community and its laws and interventions are implicated in violence and oppression.

governmental and non-governmental fora.[51] Liberal internationalists, such as Michael Ignatieff, argue:

> We know from historical experience that when human beings have defensible rights—when their agency as individuals is protected and enhanced—they are less likely to be abused and oppressed. On these grounds, we count the diffusion of human rights instruments as progress even if there remains an unconscionable gap between the instruments and the actual practices of states charged to comply with them.[52]

Ignatieff recognises that states are slow to demonstrate progress in their treatment of citizens, but argues that the international human rights regime has empowered victims and global civil society to challenge state practice; in this sense, progress has been made.

However, a strong conviction that the proliferation of the human rights regime is indicative of moral progress can hide the way in which human rights talk has been instrumentalised and co-opted by states for their own ends. Julie Mertus describes how human rights talk has been used as 'bait' by the United States government to get US citizens to support its foreign policy whilst, in reality, applying double standards.[53] For example, the US consistently advocates the universality of human rights, saying that they must not be 'swept under the rug';[54] however, it refuses to sign a number of international human rights treaties.[55] Even when the US finally signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in 1992, after a lengthy

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[51] See, for example, Donnelly, *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*; Richard Falk, 'Think Again: Human Rights', *Foreign Policy,* March/April 2004, pp. 18-26; Ignatieff, *Human Rights as Politics and Idolatry*; Keck and Sikkink, *Activists beyond Borders*; Korey, *NGOs and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*; and Waldron, *Liberal Rights*.

[52] Ignatieff, *Human Rights*, p. 4.

[53] Julie Mertus, *Bait and Switch: Human Rights and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

[54] Lorne W. Craner, *Briefing on Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The US Record 2003-2004,* http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/rm/32537.htm (last accessed March 25, 2008).

[55] Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Status of Ratifications of the Principal International Human Rights Treaties*, http://www.unhchr.ch/pdf/report.pdf (last accessed March 25, 2008).

delay, the Bush Administration added a number of reservations. One such reservation was to Article 7 of the ICCPR, which asserts: 'No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment'.[56] The US readily condemns other countries for torture: in the recent report *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy*, for example, the US criticised Jordan for such human rights abuses as 'arbitrary arrest, prolonged detention and torture'.[57] However, the US government does not hold its own behaviour to the same standard. Peter Singer discusses the treatment of suspected Al Qaeda members held by the US in Afghanistan and on the island Diego Garcia:

> According to a *Washington Post* report based on interviews with U.S. national security officials, these prisoners are subjected to 'stress and duress' techniques, which include an initial beating to 'soften up' the captive, followed by sleep deprivation through bright lights and loud noises, being kept standing or kneeling for hours in painful positions…[58]

The desire to be seen to observe human rights and thus accorded legitimacy remains strong, but this does not transfer into substantive observance. The US has been known to hand over prisoners to states such as Syria, where human rights are not observed, with one CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) official remarking: 'We don't kick the [expletive] out of them. We send them to other countries so *they* can kick the [expletive] out of them'.[59] The US employs the cosmopolitan rhetoric of universal rights, but in practice, an obsession with state security and the well-being of its own citizens takes precedence.

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[56] *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,* http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/a_ccpr.htm (last accessed March 25, 2008).

[57] *Supporting Human Rights and Democracy: The US Record 2003-2004,* http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/31167.pdf, p. 179 (last accessed March 25, 2008).

[58] Peter Singer, *The President of Good and Evil: Taking George W. Bush Seriously* (London: Granta Publications, 2004), p. 82.

[59] Remark made to *The Washington Post,* cited by Singer, *The President of Good and Evil*, p. 82.

The clash between discourse and practice is an obvious example of the limitations of the contemporary human rights regime. US exceptionalism has been discussed at great length; it is perhaps no surprise that a major world power is able to flout international law. But what about the regime's influence on repressive states? Is it as unambiguously positive as it is portrayed in much of the literature? James Ron argues that it is not, pointing to the mixed impact of the human rights regime on detainees in the Israeli Occupied Territories. He observes that around 1991-1992 a significant change took place in the methods of interrogation that Israeli security agencies employed against Palestinians, a change that came about because of the pressure that non-governmental organisations such as Human Rights Watch placed on the Israeli government to change these practices.[60] Interrogators used severe physical violence against detainees from 1988-1990, including beatings which often led to broken bones and a need for hospitalisation. At some point over the following two years, changes took place: interrogation was less physically violent, the state had increased control over the interrogation process, and military authorities endeavoured to give the process a more humane image.[61] However, the increase in humanity went only so far; psychological procedures took over as the interrogation methods of choice, including extensive sleep deprivation, isolation, and body position abuse, all of which cause severe psychological harm and trauma.[62] Herein lies one of the dangers of the human rights regime: the tendency to look for empirically observable changes in practice—assuaging our guilt and encouraging us to believe that things really are getting better—without attending to less observable psychological or emotional aspects of abuse or to the underpinning structural

[60] James Ron, 'Varying Methods of State Violence', *International Organization*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (1997), pp. 275-300.
[61] James Ron, 'Varying Methods of State Violence', pp. 275-277.
[62] James Ron, 'Varying Methods of State Violence', pp. 286, 294.

dimensions of political practices.[63] Of course political theorists cannot entirely be blamed for the rhetorical adoption of their ideas in the public sphere, without serious underlying commitment to action. My point, though, is that aspects of liberal thought make it particularly easy for this kind of appropriation to take place.

The projects of cosmopolitan international theorists also depend on a strong assumption of moral progress. Beitz, Pogge, and Singer all rely on persuasive moral arguments that hope to convince agents at various levels to redistribute wealth in order to relieve poverty. Beitz and Pogge target elite leadership of states and international institutions, arguing for structural changes that will shift wealth from the affluent West to the global poor.[64] Singer targets individuals, arguing for a radical increase in charitable donations to organisations that work to alleviate global poverty.[65] Both strategies assume that agents are aware of global poverty, that they care, and that they are able to be persuaded to make personal or communal sacrifices in order to better the lives of those who are less well off.

Neglects history and social context

One of the consequences of narrow problem-solving approaches to global suffering is that they largely neglect the historical and social contexts in which they operate. In global justice literatures, Singer's proposed solution to injustice has come under particular attack for ignoring

[63] The example of torture practices in repressive states is just one illustration of the human rights regime's deflection of attention from hidden abuses, chosen because it falls within the traditional focus on civil and political rights. It is important to note that in focusing primarily on discrete, observable abuses, the rights regime also largely fails to address such structural inequalities as those arising from an unjust global economic order. See, for example, Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*.

[64] Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations*; Pogge, *World Poverty and Human Rights*.

[65] Singer, 'The Singer Solution to World Poverty'.

historical antecedents, economic structures, and social context.[66] Beitz and Pogge pay more attention to historical and social contexts in their account of poverty; however, they too propose forward-looking solutions that largely fail to work through the injustices of the past. Human rights discourse proposes generalisable guidelines for dealing with human rights violations; however, these abstract from particular instances of abuse and are more concerned with punishing the perpetrators through legal procedure than with addressing the underlying economic, cultural, or historical grievances. This neglect of what the past has to teach us, both about ourselves as political agents and about contemporary dilemmas or atrocities, is extremely short-sighted. Friedrich Kratochwil argues that 'critical historicity is an indispensable precondition for grasping our predicament as agents'.[67] Without an understanding of those historical and social processes that have facilitated present suffering, our reflections on how we might address that suffering are inevitably limited.

Singer's approach to world poverty is emotive, persuasive, and simple to implement. In this sense, it is political: his approach is calculated to motivate action—the sort of action that involves writing a cheque or reading out a credit card number. However, he does not take global economic structures into account, nor does he consider historical processes. He reduces the issue of global poverty to a matter of money, all but ignoring the human element. Andrew Kuper states baldly that 'if Singer's exhortations make you want to act immediately in the ways he

[66] Andrew Kuper, 'More Than Charity: Cosmopolitan Alternatives to the "Singer Solution"', *Ethics and International Affairs*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2002), pp. 107-120.
[67] Friedrich Kratochwil, 'History, Action and Identity: Revisiting the 'Second' Great Debate and Assessing its Importance for Social Theory', *European Journal of International Relations*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2006), p. 21.

recommends, you should not do so'.[68] His argument is that Singer seduces us into believing that there is an easy path to poverty reduction and that in fact his approach 'is likely to seriously harm the poor'.[69] The issue of world poverty is just too complex to solve by throwing money at the problem:

> [Singer's] analogies and other arguments abstract from the causal dynamics of poverty and opportunity, and from the mediated and indirect nature of social relations at a global scale…A theory that does not include a contextual and institutional analysis (in the broadest sense) is condemned to recommending brief symptomatic relief, or even damaging and counterproductive action.[70]

Kuper argues for a *political philosophy* in the place of Singer's practical ethics: a philosophy that considers the roles of history, social and political structures, and economic institutions.

Unlike Singer, Pogge both acknowledges the historical antecedents of world poverty and proposes a revision of global economic structures in response. He proffers a historical account of world poverty, saying that 'the present circumstances of the global poor are significantly shaped by a dramatic period of conquest and colonization, with severe oppression, enslavement, even genocide, through which the native institutions and cultures of four continents were destroyed or severely traumatized'.[71] Beitz, too, in more recent years, has noted a need to take into account those historical accounts of poverty put forward by developmental economists and economic historians.[72] However, despite presenting a more nuanced account of global suffering than

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[68] Kuper, 'More Than Charity', p. 110.
[69] Kuper, 'More than Charity', p. 110.
[70] Kuper, 'More than Charity', p. 113.
[71] Pogge, *World Poverty*, p. 203.
[72] Beitz, 'Cosmopolitanism and Global Justice', pp. 22-23.

Singer, they both propose abstract, forward-looking solutions that do not deal with the past in any significant sense.

The neglect of history in formulating solutions to global poverty is beginning to be addressed by some cosmopolitan theorists. Catherine Lu, for example, argues that the major problem with cosmopolitan liberalism is that it ignores history, and proposes 'reparative justice…as a complement to a cosmopolitan liberal theory of global justice'.[73] Reparative justice 'seeks a moral accounting of that history of injustice, that includes acknowledgement of the historical wrong, [*sic*] and material reparations for victims and their descendents who continue to suffer the negative legacies of historical injustice'.[74] However, she goes on to say that such justice can only be compatible with cosmopolitan liberalism, saying that it is 'unintelligible' outside such a moral framework. This claim is narrow theoretical hubris indeed; cosmopolitan liberalism does not have a monopoly on morality or on action oriented towards the relief of present suffering with historical causes.

Neglects inner lives

The instrumental rationality of liberal approaches to suffering means that non-immanent, non-observable factors such as the inner lives of individuals and communities are neglected. International governmental and non-governmental organisations that focus exclusively on human

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[73] Catherine Lu, 'Cosmopolitan Liberalism and the Faces of Injustice in International Relations', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (2005), pp. 406-407.
[74] Lu, 'Cosmopolitan Liberalism', p. 406.

rights and poverty relief can make situations worse.[75] Cosmopolitan and human rights theorists have a particular rationalist way of knowing and acting; this leaves no room for the insights of classical realism, with its emphasis on tragedy and the political;[76] early critical theory, with its emphasis on particular suffering tempered with promise and hope;[77] or psychoanalysis, with its insistence on the possibility of individual and communal working through.[78] Brown argues that cosmopolitan theorists (and other inheritors of the rationalist, liberal tradition):

> as modern heirs of the Scottish Enlightenment, have no time for such quasi-theological notions [as evil or tragedy]. For them, when people do bad things or behave uncooperatively it is because they are pursuing what they take to be their rational interests in a context which provides no incentive to cooperate or behave well; moreover, there can be no such thing as a tragic dilemma, because, given enough brainpower employed to solve a problem, the right thing will always become clear.[79]

A strong belief in moral learning and in problem-solving theory means that, given time, thought and persuasion, the world's ills can be eradicated through rational (primarily legal, technical, or institutional) means. These means do not include 'looking behind the curtain'[80] to see the inner lives and sufferings of individuals or communities; they do not include making space for psychological healing; and they do not include the realist and critical theoretic acknowledgment that life is difficult, suffering inevitable, and progress fragile.

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[75] See, for example, Mark Duffield, *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001). See also the discussion of famine relief in Edkins, 'Legality with a Vengeance'.
[76] See, for example, Lebow, *The Tragic Vision of World Politics*; Hawthorn, 'Liberalism since the Cold War'.
[77] See, for example, Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*; Jay M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
[78] See, for example, Judith Lewis Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (London: Pandora, 1992); Rena Moses-Hrushovski, *Deployment: Hiding Behind Power Struggles as a Character Defense* (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson, 1994); George H. Pollock, *The Mourning-Liberation Process* (Madison: International Universities Press, 1989).
[79] Chris Brown, 'The House that Chuck Built', p. 375.
[80] A quote from the Trappist monk Thomas Merton's book *Contemplative Prayer* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), cited in Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 42-43.

The failure to look beyond easy solutions for the observable ramifications of human rights abuses and refugee crises is endemic. Richard F. Mollica, psychiatrist and director of the Harvard Program in Refugee Trauma, argues that the human rights regime's narrow focus on justice fails to promote individual well-being in the wake of horrific violence. The focus on proving human rights violations and holding perpetrators accountable fails to consider the effect of that violence on those that have survived. He maintains that '[s]ocieties make a grave error when they emphasize obtaining the details of killings and other crimes over the mission of self-healing'.[81] He also notes that seven million out of the twelve million refugees worldwide have been kept in refugee camps for over a decade—a situation that is disastrous for their physical and mental well-being.[82] In Cambodia, a letter from one of the interns of the Site 2 refugee camp on the Thai border was smuggled out which stated that the trauma caused by the Pol Pot regime had been outstripped by the more overwhelming trauma of living in appalling conditions in the United Nations refugee camp.[83] Mollica argues that with all good intentions, 'the international community has created environments that maximise almost every negative social factor that fosters illness, such as chronic unemployment and unremitting violence'.[84]

A similar failure to look beyond that which is easily measured and to consider the hidden aspects of human experience exists in Australia around issues concerning the Aboriginal community.

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[81] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, p. 239.
[82] See Merrill Smith, 'Warehousing Refugees: A Denial of Rights, a Waste of Humanity', *World Refugee Survey 2004*, pp. 38-56. Accessible online: http://www.refugees.org/data/wrs/04/pdf/38-56.pdf (last accessed March 11, 2008).
[83] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 224-228.
[84] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds,* p. 227.

Marlene Kong, a medic who has worked in refugee camps in Sierra Leone, is also an indigenous Australian. She argues that the extremely poor physical and mental health of Aboriginals is in large part due to unobservable factors such as a negative history that systematically destroyed their culture and took their land. She maintains that 'without a soul, a community is destined to fail. There is a lot of pain, anger and grief suffered by Aboriginal people, and they don't have much hope for the future'. This immense pain and lack of hope cannot be solved solely by rational means—'changing policies takes more than evidence…it's not about money, but about recognising suffering'.[85] A rationalist, forward-looking, liberal approach to suffering, however, largely neglects the psychological, trans-generational dimensions of suffering, focusing instead on observable problems amenable to programmatic intervention.

Conclusion

Cosmopolitan political thought and human rights discourse fall squarely within Geuss's rubric of modern ethics: their central organising question is 'What ought we to do?', and the corresponding answer is restricted by its dependence on an instrumental rationality that utilises 'useful knowledge' to solve problems of poverty and repression. They are also characterised by an unyielding immanency and a reluctance to look beyond that which can observed, measured, and predicted. Thus the solutions proffered are legal, technical solutions that are profoundly limited and distract attention from the human aspects of suffering. The human rights regime relies on international legislation that abstracts from particularity and enshrines protection for the

[85] Rachel Nowak, 'Time to Heal a Troubled Nation', *New Scientist*, 2 June 2007, pp. 50-51.

individual in law. However, for those who are struggling to survive, the existence of legal rights means little; they have no means of accessing these rights and the international community's obsession with collating records of violations and administering justice overlooks those who suffer the most.[86] Furthermore, the human rights regime's rules-based nature and its abstraction from real-life suffering distracts from actual political situations and focuses attention away from a historical understanding of the present in an attempt to forge a better future. Cosmopolitan political theorists also propose technical solutions with which to alleviate global poverty, including an extension of a Rawlsian difference principle internationally, the adoption of a type of Tobin tax, and donations to charity. All these overlook the sociohistorical and political dimensions of poverty, proposing technical economic solutions to a much more complex and multifaceted problem.

The normative turn in International Relations was, in part, a reply to the perceived inability of political realism to offer 'useful' knowledge with which to address global suffering. However, in basing their approaches to human suffering upon a foundation of moral progress, liberal cosmopolitanism and human rights neglect two of the central ideas of political realism: the notion of tragedy and the inability to escape the logic of the political. A classical realist account of politics is not bereft of normative content as is often assumed, for example, in Beitz's first essay in *PTIR*, where he rejects Hobbesian moral scepticism. However, unlike normative approaches to International Relations, a classical realist account rejects the notion of moral learning, maintaining that normative approaches are not sufficiently sensitive to the tragedy and

[86] Although, as noted earlier, the human rights movement has also been appropriated by grassroots movements to fight for legal and political change (Jabri, 'Solidarity and Spheres of Culture', p. 719).

fragility of life and humanity. Thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau perceive liberal thought as naively discounting the messiness of politics, replacing it with an overly optimistic moralism and legalism that disguises the realities of life. He does not discount their aims, but vehemently disagrees with their tidy, abstract approach to politics. In Rengger's words:

> [L]iberals, he believed, had to see the reality of their predicament squarely and that, fundamentally, meant confronting the tragic in all its forms: the 'tragic sense of life, the tragic presence of evil, the tragic antinomies of human existence' and so on and so on. This does not mean that there is no *sense* of the good in politics, but rather 'there is no progress toward the good, noticeable from year to year, but undecided conflict which sees today good, tomorrow evil prevail'.[87]

In this sense, Morgenthau's critique is similar to that of the early Frankfurt School,[88] who also perceive moral progress as fragile and reversible; thinkers such as Walter Benjamin and Adorno were famously hostile to the notion of progressive historicism.[89] Adorno maintained that a strong belief in moral learning was problematic in that it encouraged a discounting of those aspects of life not congruent with that belief. This is certainly borne out with regard to the human rights regime in contemporary politics: the perception of a consensus on human rights

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[87] Nicholas Rengger, 'Tragedy or Skepticism?', p. 324.

[88] See Scheuerman, 'Realism and the Left', for an exposition of the influence of the Left on the development of Morgenthau's thought. He spent his early career in Frankfurt, working closely with the great socialist barrister, Hugo Sinzheimer. During those years, he was influenced both by his work in chambers, working for social reform, and by the left-wing intellectual milieu of the city. Scheuerman argues that too little has been made of the common intellectual roots of Morgenthau's classical realism and the Frankfurt School of critical theory and that recent moves to highlight the critical potential of realism are not as unexpected a shift as they might initially appear. See, for example, Richard K. Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', *International Organization*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (1984), pp. 225-286, for a discussion of the critical potential of classical realism. See also William E. Scheuerman, 'A Theoretical Missed Opportunity? Hans J. Morgenthau as Critical Realist?' in Duncan Bell (ed.), *Tragedy, Power, and Justice: Variations on a Realist Theme* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming); Brent J. Steele, 'Eavesdropping on Honoured Ghosts: From Classical to Reflexive Realism', *Journal of International Relations and Development*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (2007), pp. 272-300; and Michael C. Williams, *The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

[89] See Chapter Three of this thesis for an exegesis of Adorno's critique of modern thought.

amongst the international community and the knowledge that 'something is being done' encourages complacency when complacency has no place.

The normative turn also has a tendency to discount the pervasiveness of the political, positing a world in which morality and law govern and where liberal democracies have the right to intervene on behalf of the powerless in the name of human rights. Here, again, classical realism offers a warning: Schmitt argues that the idea that wars can be fought under the banner of humanity is a delusion; they cannot escape the logic of the political. They often mask self-interest with moral intent— 'the concept of humanity is an especially useful ideological instrument of imperialist expansion'—and they inevitably require the dehumanisation of the enemy—'denying the enemy the quality of being human and declaring him to be an outlaw of humanity'.[90] Thus, universal categories are wielded on the behalf of some, to the denigration of others. Although I do not advocate a realist perception of world politics, in which self-preservation is the organising motive and the state is reified, the warning that the realm of world politics cannot be tamed and controlled by the exercise of rationality is prescient.[91]

I argue that we need an approach to violence and suffering in world politics that goes beyond the mainstream problem-solving approach, which abstracts from and obscures rather than exposes unpleasant reality. Such an approach would recognize the fragility of moral progress and look beyond rational, problem-solving solutions to human suffering. It would take historical and

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[90] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, p. 54.

[91] For a critique of realist anti-cosmopolitanism, see Devetak, 'Between Kant and Pufendorf'. Devetak argues the *a priori* decision that humanitarian intervention is wrong is in itself a normative judgement, and that this shuts down the political by taking away the exercise of judgement in the moment of decision.

cultural factors into account and look beyond the immediate physical and legal ramifications of suffering in order to promote the broader cultural and psychological healing needed to support sustained physical health.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CRITICAL TURN IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In the previous chapter, I traced the normative turn in International Relations and argued that although it widens the issues considered by international political theorists, the project remains restricted by its dependence on a liberal vision of progress that proffers technical solutions to the world's ills. The vision of modernity subscribed to by liberal thinkers emphasises its progressive march towards an increasingly moral international system, encouraging misplaced complacency and obscuring those aspects of human experience that cannot easily be measured or controlled. Thus, although the normative project is prompted by global suffering, its understanding of suffering is profoundly limited and takes into account primarily 'useful knowledge': it fails to situate subjects in their social and historical context or to consider bodily and psychological pain.

In social and political thought, disaffection with grand narratives of progress and the modern obsession with instrumental knowledge has prompted the development of broadly critical theories of society: theories that question generally accepted assumptions about modernity and epistemology. Two particularly influential strands of critical theory are the Frankfurt School and poststructuralism. Frankfurt School critical theory perceives the 'dark side' of modernity alongside its potential emancipatory force, maintaining that under modernity, reason is replaced

by instrumental rationality and critical voices are stifled by the 'anonymous sway of the *status quo*'.[1] Poststructural theory is even less optimistic about the possibility of progress, pointing to the inextricable link between knowledge claims, power, and politics.

The perceived poverty of mainstream International Relations theory has prompted a number of its thinkers to draw on Frankfurt School and poststructural critical theories to articulate a more embedded and human approach to world politics.[2] The majority of critical International Relations theory in the Frankfurt school tradition draws on Habermasian discourse ethics, which move away from the liberal Rawlsian vision of a just society governed by abstract rules and emphasise instead the emancipatory potential of widening dialogic communities.[3] Critical International Relations theory in the poststructural tradition questions settled assumptions about world politics, pointing to the violence inherent in established social arrangements, and is deeply

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[1]Theodor W. Adorno, *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1981), p. 21.

[2] For a general overview of critical theories and their influence on international political thought, see Richard Wyn Jones (ed.), *Critical Theory and World Politics* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2001); Rengger and Thirkell-White (eds.), *Critical International Relations Theory After 25 Years*. Another critical tradition that has been influential in International Relations is neo-Marxist international political economy, but I do not have the space to consider its influence here. See, for example, Robert W. Cox and Timothy J. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order,* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[3] See Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992); Richard Devetak, 'The Project of Modernity and International Relations Theory', *Millennium* ,Vol. 24, No. 1 (1995), pp. 27-51; Devetak, 'Between Kant and Pufendorf'; Andrew Linklater, *Men and Citizens in the Theory of International Relations* (London: Macmillan, 1982); Andrew Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community: Ethical Foundations of the Post-Westphalian Era* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998); Richard Shapcott, 'Cosmopolitan Conversations: Justice Dialogue and the Cosmopolitan Project', *Global Society*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2002) , pp. 221-243; Martin Weber, 'The Critical Social Theory of the Frankfurt School, and the 'Social Turn' in IR', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005), pp. 195-209. See also the debate between Mark Hoffman and Nicholas Rengger: Mark Hoffman, 'Critical Theory and the Inter-Paradigm Debate', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (1987), pp. 231-249; Nicholas J. Rengger, 'Going Critical? A Response to Hoffman', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (1988), pp. 81-89.

concerned with the notion of alterity in international politics.[4] Both strands of thought identify their approaches as exemplifying *critical* theory as opposed to problem-solving theory, in Cox's formulation, although, as is discussed below, they succeed in doing so to varying degrees.

In this chapter, I consider the ways in which these two strands of critical International Relations theory deal with the problem of suffering in international politics. The chapter is divided into two main parts. In part one, I examine the Habermasian response to the brokenness of modernity and its influence on international political thought, drawing on the work of Andrew Linklater, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser. I then consider the Habermasian turn in light of the limitations of liberalism discussed in Chapter One: focus on rational, problem-solving theory; strong belief in moral progress; paucity of history and social context; and failure to consider inner lives. I argue that the Habermasian turn has resulted in the development of a more embedded emancipatory theory: one that widens the conversation beyond elites and addresses broader issues of exclusion, identity, and redistribution. However, it has not gone far enough: it continues to be based on a strong assumption of moral progress, it emphasises procedural solutions to the problem of exclusion and difference, and it underestimates the strength of existing power asymmetries and historical wrongs, both of which seriously undermine the

[4] Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism'; Richard K. Ashley and R. B. J. Walker, 'Conclusion: Reading Dissidence/Writing the Discipline: Crisis and the Question of Sovereignty in International Studies', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 34, No. 3 (1990), pp. 367-416; David Campbell, 'Why Fight: Humanitarianism, Principles, and Post-structuralism', *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (1998); David Campbell and Michael J. Shapiro, (eds.), *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999); William E. Connolly, *Identity|Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox*, expanded edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002); William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1996); Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*; Vivienne Jabri, *Discourses on Violence: Conflict Analysis Reconsidered* (New York: Manchester University Press, 1996).

potential of a conversation to address human suffering. In part two, I examine the influence of poststructural theory on international political thought. I argue that a poststructural approach offers a greater awareness of the fragility of moral progress in a radically broken world, drawing our attention to exclusionary structures and practices that perpetuate suffering and acknowledging the role of inner lives in the politics of violence. However, there is a tendency on the part of some poststructural thinkers to overemphasise the personal to the detriment of public and institutional categories and the task of keeping faith with trauma (or 'marking the lack') to the detriment of working through.

Habermas and Critical International Political Thought

Habermas and the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

As discussed earlier, the Frankfurt School has its roots in the founding of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research as an autonomous research centre in 1923. The early Frankfurt School advocated an interdisciplinary approach to social thought and comprised such thinkers as Max Horkheimer, Adorno, Herbert Marcuse, Eric Fromm, and Walter Benjamin. A vibrant group of philosophers, sociologists, and political scientists, these thinkers were deeply concerned with the analysis of modernity and rejected traditional positivist assumptions in favour of a constellation

of approaches to sociological research.[5] They advocated *critical theory*: theory that looks beyond the given order to the structures that sustain it and imagines its transformation. The major foci of the early Frankfurt School were the critique of modernity, reflections on epistemology, and the pursuit of emancipation, although the group's emancipatory impulses became increasingly utopian as time went on. Adorno's writings in particular became progressively more pessimistic about the possibility of emancipatory action beyond negation and utopian imaginings.[6]

Habermas is a direct inheritor of this group of thinkers: his thought developed in reaction to theirs and he is often described as the foremost thinker of the so-called 'second generation' of the Frankfurt School. As a student of Adorno from 1956, Habermas readily adopted the Frankfurt School's openness to a wide range of philosophical and social theories. However, he was dissatisfied with their increasing pessimism,[7] and much of his theorising is an attempt to craft a more positive way forward. Adorno and Horkheimer were deeply sceptical of the project of modernity, which they saw as promising good but delivering harm, a theme they expounded in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.[8] They maintained that the type of knowledge with which Enlightenment ideals are pursued is instrumental knowledge, which is used to promote an efficient, profit-driven system. As a result, however, humans become perceived as commodities valued primarily in terms of market value, making them increasingly unable to express social

[5] See, for example, Theodor W. Adorno, 'Sociology and Empirical Research', in Theodor W. Adorno, H. Albert, R. Dahrendorf, J. Habermas, H. Pilot, and K. R. Popper, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969/1976), pp. 68-86.

[6] See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*.

[7] See, for example, Habermas's critique of Adorno and Horkheimer in *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), pp. 106-130.

[8] Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (London: Verso Books, 1944/1997).

criticism. Adorno maintains that the task of social theory in today's commodified society is to preserve alternatives to the *status quo*. However, for Adorno, this is largely a *negative* task that refuses to prescribe positive courses of action, but instead determinedly preserves that which is non-instrumental and non-identical.

Habermas found Adorno's negative dialectics profoundly unsatisfactory and responded to the dialectic of enlightenment with a defence of modernity and the development of positive, emancipatory social (and moral) theory. His later work, in particular, takes a different turn from that of the earlier Frankfurt School: he defends much of the Enlightenment thought and modernity that Adorno and Horkheimer so bitterly attacked, particularly in their later years. As well as differing in terms of substantive aims, Habermas's work also departs markedly from his predecessors in relation to the place of philosophy in social theory. Where Adorno and Horkheimer eschewed the notion of a systematic approach to social theory, preferring a constellation of approaches, Habermas's work is devoted to the delineation of a systematic approach with a quasi-transcendent foundation. This contrasts markedly with Adorno and Horkheimer's position that there can be no such foundation. As David Held puts it:

> The whole emphasis in [Habermas's] work – on engaging *and* appropriating competing traditions of philosophy and social thought, reformulating the foundations of social theory, and demonstrating the superiority of his stance over others – contrasts markedly with the main interests of the Frankfurt theorists.[9]

Where Adorno and Horkheimer sought to enlighten Enlightenment by demonstrating the mismatch between ideals and actuality, Habermas seeks to harness its positive potential. And

[9] David Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1980), p. 253.

where his predecessors shied away from positive prescription, be it substantive or procedural, Habermas advocates rational debate in search of consensus and engagement with public policy.

Habermas's writings can be loosely categorised into two periods: his early period, which focuses on social critique, and sits more comfortably with the trajectory of the early Frankfurt School;[10] and his later period, which develops a normative theory of discourse ethics, and moves further away from the aims and methods of his predecessors. It is this later period that has most influenced international political thought: Habermas's discourse ethics have been appropriated by a variety of critical international theorists.

At the core of Habermas's discourse ethics is his belief that all speech has at its heart an orientation towards consensus, although this is rarely borne out in practice. The structures of language and communication anticipate 'a form of life in which truth, freedom and justice are possible'[11] and thus provide the normative foundation upon which a critical theory of society rests. As such, we can judge actual communication situations in light of an ideal form of communicative discourse. In an ideal speech situation 'participants share a tradition and their orientations are normatively integrated to such an extent that they start from the same definition

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[10] See, for example, Jürgen Habermas, 'The Analytical Theory of Science and Dialectics: A Postscript to the Controversy between Popper and Adorno', in Theodor W. Adorno, H. Albert, R. Dahrendorf, J. Habermas, H. Pilot, and K. R. Popper, *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1969/1976), pp. 131-162; Jürgen Habermas, 'A Positivistically Bisected Rationalism', in Adorno et al., *The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology*, pp. 198-225, and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

[11] Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p. 256; see also Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action (Volume 1) Reason and the Nationalization of Society*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (London: Heinemann, 1984); Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action (Volume 2) Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, trans. Thomas McCarthy (Cambridge: Polity, 1987).

of the situation and do not disagree about the claims to validity that they reciprocally raise'.[12] A consensus reached in such a situation is termed a 'rational consensus', and is the criterion by which truth can be judged. Thus, deliberation is always goal-oriented—reaching towards consensus—and analytical, whereby the force of the better argument wins out.

Critical reflection and dialogue are central to the application of Habermas's ideas in practice. His conception of public space allows all those who may be affected by social norms and political decisions to be included in the deliberation pertaining to the drafting and enactment of these norms. He maintains that 'just those norms deserve to be valid that could meet with the approval of those potentially affected, insofar as the latter participate in rational discourses'.[13] This ideal formulation of public space serves as a comparator against which actual situations can be judged. Such judgments reveal situations of distorted communication, for example, where consensus is reached by coercion. Habermas defends liberal human rights on this basis, saying that they put forth ideals against which situations on the ground can be measured: '[human rights] discourse itself sets the standards in whose light the latent violations of its own claims can be discovered and corrected'.[14] He cites their potential as a universal vehicle of communication and protection for individuals and argues that one of their fundamental purposes is to ensure that every person has a voice and recourse to international law.

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[12] Jürgen Habermas, 'What is Universal Pragmatics?', in William Outhwaite (ed.), *The Habermas Reader* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 129, n. 2.
[13] Jürgen Habermas, *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory on Law and Democracy* trans. William Rehg (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), p. 127.
[14] Jürgen Habermas, 'Remarks on Legitimation through Human Rights', in Jürgen Habermas, *The Postnational Constellation: Political Essays*, trans. Max Pensky (ed.) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), p. 120.

Habermas and Critical International Political Thought

The vast majority of critical International Relations theory in the tradition of the Frankfurt School draws upon Habermas's later work, and in particular, his discourse ethics. Andrew Linklater summarises the normative goal of critical International Relations theory in decidedly Habermasian terms:

> The normative aim of critical IR theory…is to increase the spheres of social interaction that are governed by dialogue and consent rather than power and force; to expand the number of human beings who have access to a speech community that has the potential to become universal; and to create the socioeconomic preconditions of effective, as opposed to nominal, involvement for all members of that community.[15]

According to Linklater, critical International Relations theory has a radically democratic aim: to increase the proportion of those who are participants in a dialogic community that is governed by consent. In this sense, it situates itself in opposition to both political realism, with its focus on high politics and securing the state, and Rawlsian and cosmopolitan liberalism, with their abstraction from particularity and non-participatory, top-down approach to world politics.

In *The Transformation of Political Community*, Linklater articulates a progressive critical theory that advocates the *triple transformation* of political community: 'to secure greater respect for cultural differences, stronger commitments to the reduction of material inequalities and significant advances in universality'.[16] He draws on Kant, Marx, and Habermas in elucidating his project; these thinkers emphasise the universalising processes at work in human history and

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[15] Andrew Linklater, 'The Changing Contours of Critical International Relations Theory' in Jones, *Critical Theory and World Politics*.
[16] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 3.

perceive the emancipatory potential in such trends. Linklater is particularly influenced by Habermas's discourse ethics, defending them against their critics.[17] He argues that although unlikely to be fully attained in practice, the aim of discourse ethics is laudable: 'to remove the modes of exclusion which obstruct the goal—which may never be realised—of global arrangements which rest upon the consent of each and every member of the human race'.[18] He maintains that although thick, prescriptive versions of discourse ethics may exclude those outside a liberal tradition, a thin version should enable vulnerable societies to protect themselves from marginalisation by powerful liberal societies.[19] The thin version decrees that 'all individuals have a right to be consulted about decisions made outside their society which disadvantage them'[20] but does not require them to adopt liberal democratic politics. This thin cosmopolitanism has 'no fixed and final vision of the future'.[21] Instead, it proposes a particular approach to dialogue through which communities come to their own decisions about what is and is not appropriate. Linklater argues that the right to participation in dialogue within ever-widening communities is the best means with which to negotiate difficult questions of inequality and marginalisation. He cautions vigilance against coercion and repression, however, noting that any dialogic process must be self-reflective and guard against the marginalisation of non-liberal world views.[22]

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[17] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, pp. 87-100. Linklater discusses both feminist and postmodern critiques of Habermasian discourse ethics, emphasising the similarities (and downplaying the differences) between Habermas and his critics.
[18] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 93.
[19] Andrew Linklater, 'Dialogic politics and the civilizing process', *Review of International Studies* Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005), pp. 141- 154.
[20] Linklater, 'Dialogic politics', p. 144.
[21] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 49.
[22] For example, Linklater points to the failure of the Australian government to engage with the Yolngu people on the issue of land claims. The Yolngu do not have a liberal-individualist perspective on land ownership; they believe that land is possessed by (and possesses) a community, a belief that is not allowed for in the Australian legal system.

Seyla Benhabib and Nancy Fraser also draw heavily on Habermas's discourse ethics in their critical social theories. They maintain that his moral theory has much to contribute to ethical dilemmas in political thought and that it compares favourably with other normative approaches to the international. In an essay on the public sphere and discourse ethics, Benhabib contrasts his conception of public space with Arendtian civic republicanism and Ackerman's liberalism, deeming it the most fruitful of these three dominant strands of normative political thought. She maintains:

> the chief virtue of the Habermasian 'discourse model of public space' is its radical indeterminacy and openness. When compared to the Arendtian one, Habermas's model neither restricts access to public space nor sets the agenda for public debate. When compared to Ackerman's neutrality principle, the discourse model of public space is also distinctive in that it captures the dynamic and renegotiable aspects of such distinctions as that between the right and the good.[23]

Fraser also makes the case for a Habermasian approach to social theory. She argues that 'something like Habermas's idea of the public sphere is indispensable to critical social theory and democratic political practice…no attempt to understand the limits of actually existing late-capitalist democracy can succeed without in some way or another making use of it'.[24] Both theorists find in Habermas inspiration for an approach to social theory that is open and inclusive and that reintroduces a notion of an active and engaged public sphere.

Instead of disallowing the conversation, a dialogic model should encourage the suspension of assumptions and strive to understand the other point of view ('Dialogic politics', p. 149).

[23] Seyla Benhabib, 'Models of Public Space: Hannah Arendt, the Liberal Tradition, and Jürgen Habermas', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 84-85.

[24] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), p. 111.

Although Fraser and Benhabib base much of their work on Habermas's discourse ethics, they are not uncritical of his thought, believing it to privilege the liberal tradition. Benhabib maintains that Habermas's moral theory leans too close to the liberal social-contract tradition, and borrows from it 'dubious distinctions' that stand at variance with his earlier, more critical, project.[25] These dubious distinctions include a privileging of public over private spheres, justice over the good life, and the generalised other over the concrete other. Fraser argues that Habermas inherits a narrow conception of the public sphere.[26] In *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, he depicts the existence of one definitive and contained (liberal) public sphere, but fails to explore its exclusionary nature or to consider the alternative counter-publics that were established alongside the official public sphere, including: 'nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics'.[27] Foremost among those excluded from the dominant public sphere were women, who actively sought other ways to access political life: establishing voluntary associations, lobbying, and protesting. Habermas's discourse ethics thus restrict the conversation at the outset, shutting down the voices of those who most need to be heard.

Despite their perception of profound limitations in Habermas's moral theory, Fraser and Benhabib remain sympathetic critics. They perceive his thought as an important emancipatory resource and base much of their own theorising upon some variation of his discourse ethics. In *Situating the Self: Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics,*[28] Benhabib

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[25] Benhabib, 'Models of Public Space', pp. 88-89.
[26] Habermas, *Structural Transformation*; Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', pp. 109-142.
[27] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 116.
[28] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*.

reformulates Habermas's discourse ethics, arguing for a 'post-Enlightenment project of interactive universalism'.[29] She aims to 'situate reason and the moral self more decisively in contexts of gender and community, while insisting upon the discursive power of individuals to challenge such situatedness in the name of universalistic principles, future identities and as yet undiscovered communities'.[30] Benhabib's revision of Habermas's discourse ethics emphasises its political character and argues that it should be modified to reflect a more historicist and hermeneutic position and to take account of concrete as well as generalised others. The *reversibility of perspectives* is at the core of her reformulation.[31] She calls for an ongoing moral conversation, in which actors seek to listen and to understand others' points of view before making moral judgments. Fraser builds less directly on discourse ethics, but her writings have a Habermasian emphasis on participation, dialogue and democratic justice. She points to the 'all-affected principle' as central to any reflections on justice, saying that 'all those affected by a given social structure or institution have moral standing as subjects of justice in relation to it'[32] and pursues a transformative agenda of change that encompasses redistribution and recognition.

Revisiting the Limitations of Modern International Ethics

The Habermasian emphasis on a thin cosmopolitanism that proffers a mechanism—discourse ethics—for living in community without (ostensibly) prescribing substantive guidelines for living has provided inspiration for numerous critical thinkers attempting to challenge mainstream

[29] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 3.
[30] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 8.
[31] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, pp. 8, 53-54, 140-141
[32] Nancy Fraser, 'Reframing Justice in a Globalizing World', *New Left Review*, Vol. 36 (2005), p. 82.

thought without falling prey to charges of cultural imperialism or relativism. However, although this has given rise to a more embedded international theory that examines more seriously questions of power and inclusion, it does not go far enough.[33] Habermasian critical international theory emphasises a form of discourse in which the better (more rational) argument takes precedence and excludes other conversational styles; it continues to be premised on a foundation of moral progress; it fails to consider social and historical context; and it neglects the unseen emotional dimensions of global suffering. In what follows, I revisit these four themes and argue that while the Habermasian turn has gone some way to mitigating the pitfalls of liberal thought, the limitations remain.

Rational and problem-solving

Liberal political thought prescribes rational solutions to political problems, utilising the hypothetical-contract method to establish guidelines purported to be for the good of all. Habermasian critical theory, in contrast, refuses to prescribe particular ways of being or rules to live by.[34] Linklater highlights this difference between liberal social-contract and Habermasian ethics:

> Kant believed that separate moral agents had a duty to ask if it was possible to universalise the maxim underlying any action. Judgements concerning universalisability involved a process of private rationalisation for individuals rather than any dialogic encounter with others. Habermas argues that the test of universalisability

[33] Although, as we shall see, different thinkers fall prey to the assumptions of liberal thought to different degrees, and feminist thinkers such as Fraser and Benhabib go further towards an embedded approach than do critical IR theorists such as Linklater.

[34] Although, as mentioned in the next section on moral progress, in discourse ethics there are two preconditions for dialogue: egalitarian reciprocity and universal respect.

> is found not in private reason but in associating with others in wider communities dedicated to open and unrestrained dialogue.[35]

Rather than determining universal guidelines for living on the basis of a thought experiment, therefore, Habermasian theorists maintain that such decisions should be made on the basis of free and open discussion with others within a community.

In advocating the abolition of exclusionary arrangements through dialogue with the 'radically different',[36] Habermasian ethics are less formal and divorced from real world suffering than those derived from Rawlsian thought experiments.[37] Furthermore, their open-ended nature and emphasis on procedure rather than prescription acknowledges and gives space for contingency in a way that liberal approaches rarely do. However, although a discourse ethics purports to make no substantive claims, it is not as 'thin' a cosmopolitanism as its proponents maintain. Discourse ethics restrict the type of conversation from the outset by assuming the existence of an underlying consensus which can and should be reached and thus ensuring that any conversation will be oriented towards achieving that goal. Although Habermas proffers a different mechanism—dialogue—by which it can be reached, the essential position that such consensus exists and that it is able to be reached within and between given societies is a distinctive liberal assumption and radically underestimates the difficulty involved in reaching such consensus.[38]

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[35] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, pp. 91-92.
[36] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 5.
[37] For a critique of approaches to global justice premised on the Rawlsian difference principle, see Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 106-114. Benhabib maintains the Rawlsian emphasis on econometric accounting discounts the need for political judgement in reflections on justice.
[38] See Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 17-20.

Furthermore, it prioritises questions of justice over the good and by prescribing a particular type of discourse—rational argument—precludes other types of communication.

The search for basic guidelines on which all members of a community agree focuses attention on procedural issues and the minimal requirements of justice to the detriment of wider debate. In Geuss's words, discourse ethics 'encourage us to give up the search for a philosophically enlightened discussion of "the good life" and to limit our philosophical ambitions to describing…the minimal conditions of smooth human cooperation'.[39] The basic assumption in discourse ethics of an underlying consensus encourages a focus on rational analysis and goal-oriented dialogue in an attempt to uncover the basic norms by which we should organise society. Linklater argues that 'the force of the better argument'[40] prevails. This does not allow for alternative styles of conversation, marginalising those individuals who place a higher value on emotional and interpersonal dimensions of communication.[41] Just as Habermas's account of the history of the public sphere was biased and ignored its narrow, exclusionary characteristics,[42] so, too, is his ideal speech situation biased against those who are uncomfortable with a rationalist, adversarial approach to debate.

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[39] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 94.
[40] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 97.
[41] Note that feminist critiques have been instrumental in challenging exclusively analytical, goal-oriented discourses, although I do not suggest an essentialist position that makes the case for an alternative feminine style of conversation. See, for example, the discussion in Susan H. Williams, 'Legal Education, Feminist Epistemology, and the Socratic Method', *Stanford Law Review*, Vol. 45, No. 6 (1993), pp. 1571-1576. For a feminist critique of deliberative democracy, see also Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 52-80. Young advocates a broader conception of political communication, maintaining that discourse ethics should include not only diverse actors with diverse perspectives, but diverse forms of communication. She points to styles of conversation valued more highly in non-Western cultures: greeting, rhetoric, and narrative. For New Zealand Maori, for example, rituals of greeting are an important part of social and political interactions between groups, providing an opportunity for parties to acknowledge one another and build trust (p. 59).
[42] Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere', p. 116.

Even Benhabib's broader conception of discourse ethics is overly rationalist, privileging argumentative discourse. She is critical of Habermas for privileging morality, defined as questions of justice, over ethics, or the good, and for maintaining that such issues as care and responsibility are merely 'personal' matters on the fringe of ethical theory. Following Carol Gilligan, Benhabib argues that this division privileges a traditionally masculine way of being to the denigration of a more feminine perspective.[43] However, despite her feminist critique, Benhabib privileges a deliberative form of communication that entails the articulation of 'good reasons' in the public sphere.[44] This has given rise to criticism from feminist theorists, who maintain that such an approach is too restrictive and who proffer less formal forms of communication, such as those put forward by Iris Young—greeting, rhetoric, and narrative.[45] However, Benhabib maintains that Young's alternative forms of communication have no place in public space, arguing that they would introduce 'arbitrariness' and 'capriciousness' to public debate and 'limit rather than enhance social justice'.[46] In response to Benhabib's critique, Young maintains that 'Benhabib joins those who construct an opposition between the rational purity of

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[43] Seyla Benhabib, 'The Debate over Women and Moral Theory Revisited' in Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, pp. 178-202. Gilligan's classic book, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993) argues that women hear a different voice to that of men, upsetting deeply engrained ideas of uniformity, justice, and progression as they focus on an ethics of care and responsibility emerging out of relationship. For Habermas's critique of Gilligan, see Jürgen Habermas, 'Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action', in Jürgen Habermas, *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, trans. Christian Lenhardt and Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Boston: MIT Press, 1990), pp. 175-182.

[44] Seyla Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy', in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 67-74.

[45] See Iris Marion Young, 'Communication and the Other: Beyond Deliberative Democracy', in Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) pp. 120-136; Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, pp. 52-80. See also the discussion in Kimberly Hutchings, 'Speaking and Hearing: Habermasian Discourse Ethics, Feminism and IR', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 1 (2005), pp. 155-165.

[46] Benhabib, 'Toward a Deliberative Model of Democratic Legitimacy', pp. 81-83.

argument and the irrationality of other forms of communication'.[47] She does not advocate that these less formal modes of communication replace rational argumentation, but rather that they be allowed to supplement it, and thus 'give generalised reason orientation and body'.[48]

The mechanism by which Habermasian theorists seek to address the ills of modernity is dialogue among those affected parties. However, as we have seen, the conversation is restricted from the outset—it is analytical in style and oriented towards consensus about how best to solve the issue at hand. In this way, the Habermasian approach exhibits characteristics of problem-solving theory, encouraging decisions on the basis of a restricted form of knowledge that privileges abstract, rational debate. Underlying the belief that an underlying consensus exists, and that it can be uncovered through dialogue, is a strong belief in the possibility of moral progress. This, too, is a characteristic that Habermasian theory shares with liberal problem-solving theory, and I revisit this limitation next.

Assumes moral progress

A belief in the possibility of moral learning is a central plank of Habermasian critical theory, although this belief is tempered with a greater awareness of the 'ambiguities of modernity'[49] than is a liberal account of progress. Habermasian critical theorists acknowledge that alongside the potential for emancipation lies the potential for domination and inequality, but maintain that the progressive aspects of modernity are able to prevail over its 'dark side'.[50] They point to

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[47] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 78fn.
[48] Young, *Inclusion and Democracy*, p. 78fn.
[49] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 6.
[50] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 177.

historical evidence in their defence of this belief. Habermas maintains that in the eighteenth century 'the more fortunate nations' learned that unfettered power can be restrained by law and points to international human rights as a contemporary example of such progress.[51] He portrays rights as vehicles of emancipation whereby individuals are rooted in a community that affirms their identity and gives them a voice and a safe forum from which to dialogue with the 'other'. In a similar vein, Linklater points to decolonisation and the end of apartheid in South Africa as 'impressive monuments to the achievements of cosmopolitan morality'.[52] Benhabib also points to the historic achievements of modernity, citing the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, and argues that modernity itself provides the resources for reforming the less salubrious aspects of the project of modernity.[53]

A Habermasian approach to critical theory highlights a mechanism of learning: dialogue. Habermas believes that the systematic distortion of communication is at the heart of domination and that emancipation results from transcending such distortion through a process of critical reflection.[54] In an account suffused with references to moral progress, Linklater draws on Habermas's discourse ethics to argue that dialogue is the mechanism through which political communities become increasingly inclusive and just. He maintains that the best efforts to remain true to the spirit of Kant and Marx's emancipatory projects emphasise the widening of dialogic community:

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[51] Habermas, 'Remarks on Legitimation', p. 120.
[52] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 24.
[53] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 2.
[54] Held, *Introduction to Critical Theory*, p. 256.

> [Dialogue is] the medium through which greater human variety can be discovered and explored. Dialogue holds out the promise that agreements will not be reached by ignoring or suppressing marginal and dissident voices. The logic of the argument is that dialogic communities will be sensitive to the needs of the victims of the totalising project: namely, aliens beyond secured borders and a range of internally subordinate groups.[55]

Linklater perceives the *emancipatory* potential of an international system being shaped by the twin influences of globalisation and fragmentation, seeing in its transformation the possibility for 'greater universality' alongside a deep appreciation for 'the wealth of human differences'.[56] This negotiation of universality and particularity is facilitated by widening dialogic communities.

Benhabib, too, believes in the possibility of moral learning through dialogue, and argues that it is most likely to take place under conditions of modernity. She follows Habermas's Kohlbergian model of stages of reasoning, arguing that moral learning is most advanced in modern societies or 'high cultures'.[57] In Benhabib's formulation, learning takes place through a moral conversation in which the ability to perceive others' points of view, and to reason from their perspective, is crucial.[58] Her discourse ethics presuppose normative content from the outset: it is assumed that every individual is worthy of participation (*universal respect*) and that each individual has the same rights within the conversation (*egalitarian reciprocity*).[59] Benhabib asserts that 'only judgment guided by the principles of universal moral respect and reciprocity is "good" moral judgment, in the sense of being ethically right'[60] and that without these limits,

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[55] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 41.
[56] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 41.
[57] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 6.
[58] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 8.
[59] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 29.
[60] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 54.

discursive interactions might be used for amoral or manipulative purposes. She maintains that such attitudes are more likely to be found under the conditions of modernity and that, with increasing interdependence, they are spreading.[61] In this way, she links particular characteristics of discourse (respect and equality) with a narrative of progress, saying that modern subjects are more likely to engage in appropriate and reasonable dialogue.[62]

Habermasian critical theory offers a more nuanced view of progress than a liberal account; however, like liberal normative theory, it does not consider human frailty sufficiently. Linklater situates his project against political realism, which he perceives as dangerously pessimistic and hostile to normative theory. However, his critique of realism is almost exclusively a critique of neo-realist thought, which, he argues, 'preserves [realism's] imperfections'.[63] By failing to engage with classical realist thinkers such as Hans Morgenthau and Carl Schmitt, Linklater fails to address one of the more powerful critiques of progressive theory: the notion that life is inherently and tragically flawed. According to classical realism, not only is moral progress unlikely, given the predominance of self-interest as a motivator towards action, but a strong belief in its inevitability can be dangerous, as the consequences of actions targeted to solve problems, no matter how well-intended, cannot be predicted.[64]

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[61] Seyla Benhabib, *The Claims of Culture: Equality and Diversity in the Global Era* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 40.
[62] For a critique of Benhabib's notion of moral learning, see Hutchings, 'Discourse ethics, feminism and IR', pp. 158-162.
[63] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, pp. 14-45
[64] Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*.

Benhabib, too, is overly optimistic about the ease of implementing a discourse ethics. She speaks of reversing perspectives and increasing understanding of the concrete other as if these were easily attainable goals.[65] However, this underestimates the complexity and variety of humankind: taking the perspective of those who come from similar cultural and educational backgrounds is difficult enough; being able to take the perspective of someone from a radically different background is even harder. Young argues that Benhabib's notion of symmetrical reciprocity is not only unattainable but also undesirable.[66] It is hubris to assume that one can imagine what it is like to belong to a different gender, class, or race. It is also politically problematic, particularly across structures of privilege and oppression, where closely held assumptions and stereotypes cause us to misrepresent the position another would take. Instead of enhancing understanding of the other, the attempt to take another's perspective is likely to shut it down: if one assumes that one understands how another thinks and feels, one is less likely to suspend one's assumptions and listen. In the place of Benhabib's symmetrical reciprocity, therefore, Young proffers the notion of asymmetrical reciprocity, which acknowledges each subject's different life history and social standing. Such a notion replaces hubris with humility: 'one starts with the assumption that one cannot see things from the other person's perspective and waits to learn by listening to the other person to what extent they have had similar experiences'.[67] It is a more creative process of dialogue, one that more fully takes difference into account and is likely to enhance, rather than diminish, the understanding of the other.

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[65] Benhabib, *Situating the Self*, p. 8.

[66] Iris Marion Young, 'Asymmetrical Reciprocity: On Moral Respect, Wonder and Enlarged Thought', in Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 38-59.

[67] Young, 'Asymmetrical Reciprocity', p. 49.

A Habermasian approach to global politics rests on a theory of moral learning, proposing that societal learning can and does take place and that the mechanism for this learning is dialogue. With increasing dialogic communities, therefore, comes increasing justice and inclusiveness. However, this approach overestimates the ease of achieving consensus (Habermas and Linklater) or understanding (Benhabib) through dialogue. Furthermore, the analytical, goal-oriented nature of the dialogue advocated restricts the conversation from the outset, working against the goal of inclusion. One such consideration that is often excluded from Habermasian discourse ethics is attention to historical and social context, to which I turn next.

Neglects history and social context

The Habermasian turn in international political thought has prompted theory that is in many ways more embedded in historical and social context. However, despite the attempt to elucidate a broader, more contextualised approach to political theory,[68] the overall impression is of abstract, ideal theory that takes little account of social, economic, or historical constraints. Linklater maintains that 'the future of global society can be determined by *freely chosen moral principles* which further the autonomy of all human beings'.[69] Such a statement is revealing: it indicates a persistent belief in a disembedded rationality, despite the attempt to trace a more contextualised critical theory. The notion of 'freely chosen moral principles' is ideal theory, and bears little relation to the reality of life in community; all choices are influenced by past experiences and present social and economic factors.

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[68] Habermas points to the communal dimension of individual rights (Habermas, 'Remarks on Legitimation', p. 125.); Linklater speaks of the need to redress past wrongs (Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 101.)

[69] Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*, p. 22 [emphasis mine].

Fraser goes further in outlining an embedded approach to discourse ethics, proposing a status model of recognition that takes cultural, economic and political barriers to social participation seriously. She recasts recognition not as a problem merely of identity, but of social status. The status model has participation at its heart: it advocates 'a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing the misrecognized party as a full member of society, capable of participating on a par with the rest'.[70] To do this, it examines the various forms in which misrecognition is socially embedded, be it in formal law or societal norms, to name just two examples, and 'seeks institutional remedies for institutionalized harms'.[71] According to the status model, however, it is not just misrecognition that impedes participation in society; it is also the misallocation of resources, where economic structures and labour markets, for example, are organised in a way that promotes economic inequality and dampens voices where people struggle to materially survive. Fraser lists a number of motivators of social discontent; these include 'resentment of unearned privilege, abhorrence of cruelty, aversion to arbitrary power, revulsion against gross disparities of income and wealth, antipathy to exploitation, dislike of supervision, and indignation at being marginalized or excluded'.[72] These phenomena are not a disparate collection; they are firmly linked by their role in facilitating or hindering social participation.[73] When individuals fail to be given social status through a variety of mechanisms (including material), they fail to be accorded status or recognition. She criticises the liberal welfare 'affirmative' approach to problems of cultural discrimination and material inequality,

[70] Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking Recognition', *New Left Review*, Vol. 3 (2000), p. 113.
[71] Fraser, 'Rethinking Recognition', p. 116.
[72] Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political- Philosophical Exchange,* trans. Joel Golb, James Injram, and Christiane Wilke (London: Verso, 2003), p. 203.
[73] Bernstein, 'Suffering Injustice', p. 311.

which attempts to address inequality without changing underlying structures, and advocates instead a 'transformative' approach that examines deep structures of injustice.[74] Thus, Fraser's politics are deeply embedded in both cultural and economic structures. She seeks to understand the ways in which these perpetrate injustice and advocates their transformation at a deep level.

As well as promoting the transformation of unjust cultural and economic structures, Fraser has more recently called for reflection on meta-political issues, adding a third dimension of justice that she terms *the political*.[75] In this context, Fraser's notion of the political is one that specifies 'who is included in, and who excluded from, the circle of those entitled to a just distribution and reciprocal recognition'.[76] It deals with the 'who?' and 'how?' questions of justice, pointing to dialogical paths forward. Fraser argues that a post-Westphalian theory of justice must be 'dialogical at *every* level, meta-political as well as ordinary-political'.[77] Debates on justice cannot merely discuss 'what' can be done; they must also reflect on 'who' and 'how'.

The attempt to elucidate a more embedded approach to human suffering has thus had mixed results in Habermasian theory. Theorists like Linklater, who adhere closely to Habermas's discourse ethics, fail to do so, clinging to the notion of 'freely chosen moral principles' in a way that is not far removed from a Rawlsian thought experiment. Linklater perceives the goal of discourse ethics as being increasing justice and freedom. The path towards this goal is through

[74] Nancy Fraser, 'From Redistibution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age', *New Left Review I*, Vol. 212 (1995), pp. 68-93.
[75] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice', p. 74.
[76] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice', p. 75.
[77] Fraser, 'Reframing Justice', p. 87. For Fraser, 'ordinary-political' refers to issues of representation within states whilst 'meta-political' refers to the deeper issue of boundary-setting: who is included and who is excluded from a particular political community.

rational, forward-looking dialogue that neglects consideration of history and social context. Fraser, on the other hand, traces a more nuanced critical theory, one that includes attention to recognition and redistribution as precursors to participation in communal dialogue. However, even this approach, which takes sociocultural and economic structures into account, does so in order to facilitate a dialogical approach to emancipation and fails to problematise the notion of moral learning or dialogue as the mechanism of progress. Furthermore, Fraser does not look closely at historical injustices or traumas, focusing instead on more observable institutional and social barriers to participation. In what follows, I advocate the need to consider the place of individuals' and communities' *inner lives* in reflections on suffering in world politics.

Neglects inner lives

As we have seen, Habermasian critical theory prioritises a rational, goal-oriented dialogical approach to ethics in global politics and in consequence, like liberal problem-solving theory, precludes consideration of less observable aspects of human experience. Although a desire to emancipate humankind from suffering provides the motivation for discourse ethics, this suffering is all too often instrumentalised and the influence of present emotion or past traumas on present capability for political interaction is all but ignored. This is problematic because emotion plays a powerful and varied role in world politics. In cases of extreme suffering and trauma, individuals and communities can withdraw from political engagement (acting in) or use the experience as a motivator for revenge in order to right wrongs (acting out).[78]

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[78] See, for example, Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). For a more in-depth discussion on the role of trauma in world politics, see Chapter Five of this thesis.

Habermasian approaches to suffering argue that the path to emancipation from suffering is through dialogue and thus assume that all relevant human experience is able to be expressed verbally. However, this is far from the case. In her reflections on hunger, Kirsten Hastrup argues that a dependence on 'hard facts' such as social and economic structures has disallowed attention to non-observable, non-quantifiable aspects of human experience. She notes that not all experience can be put into words:

> I would contend that by far the largest proportion of cultural experience lies beyond words in this sense…Time has come to transcend the limitations of Western logocentrism and its implication that everything worth saying is immediately sayable in our own kind of alphabetical prose.[79]

The idea that a great deal of human experience is 'beyond words' is especially important when it comes to reflections on suffering. Traumatic experiences are by definition so overwhelming as to defy assimilation into normal categories in memory and in emotion. Those who have been traumatised thus have enormous difficulty in recalling and expressing their stories, and it takes time and work before they are able to be communicated verbally. Even if traumatised individuals are able to give words to their experiences and the ways in which these have shaped their world view, the strong emotion that accompanies such retelling does not fit easily into an adversarial, analytical dialogue.

Another aspect of living in political communities that is 'beyond words', or hidden from view, is the influence of historical wrongs on people's inner lives. History has a long reach, and can shape present day choices, particularly in the case of extreme suffering inflicted by one group on

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[79] Kirsten Hastrup, 'Hunger and the Hardness of Facts' *Man*, New Series, Vol. 28, No. 4 (1993), p. 732.

another. In the previous chapter, I pointed to the depoliticisation that can take place when historical traumas are not addressed, illustrating this with reference to the Australian government's relationship to its Aboriginal population. Another reaction to historical trauma is where the trauma becomes a 'chosen trauma'[80] and is used to motivate acts of revenge (as in the Balkan wars) or the reassertion of self-worth (as in the case of National Socialism in Germany). However, the analytical approach of discourse ethics leaves little room for discussion of emotion and its forward-looking orientation does not allow a focus on the past.

Linklater has recently called for 'a new agenda for critical international theory', arguing that suffering should be returned to the centre of critical thought in the manner of the early Frankfurt School. Such an agenda would address the marginalisation of the body and emotions in the Habermasian turn and '[regard] the prevalent attitudes to harm, suffering and vulnerability, and the dominant dispositions to cruelty and compassion, in different international states-systems as the principal object of sociological inquiry'.[81] However, although Linklater's re-appropriation of the notion of suffering for critical international thought is inspired by the work of the early Frankfurt School, he uses it in an instrumental, goal-oriented way that does not sit well with the work of those theorists he draws on. He proposes that humankind's common experience of bodily and emotional pain can be used to motivate an emancipatory global ethics; in short, as the foundation for moral progress.[82] In this way, suffering can be used in a positive way, as 'useful knowledge' that might provide an impetus for an increasingly moral global community. This

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[80] Vamik Volkan, *Blood Lines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism* (Colorado: Westview Press, 1997).
[81] Andrew Linklater, 'Towards a sociology of global morals with emancipatory intent', *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 33 (2007), p. 140.
[82] See also Andrew Linklater, 'The Harm Principle and Global Ethics', *Global Society*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2006), pp. 329-343.

instrumentalisation of suffering sits ill with the work of early Frankfurt School theorists such as Adorno and Horkheimer, who had a deep distrust of narratives of progress and demanded that attention be drawn to particular suffering as a counter to broad, universal categories, which were so often co-opted by the *status quo*.

Conclusion

The Habermasian turn in international political thought has articulated a critical approach to global ethics that is less rules-bound and elitist than Rawlsian liberalism. Its dialogic approach means that it is more embedded in political communities, especially in the version put forward by Fraser, who takes seriously structural and social barriers to participation. However, considerable limitations remain which undermine its critical intent and continue to obscure those aspects of human experience that do not fit into the category of useful knowledge. Although its thin cosmopolitanism purports to allow the negotiation of universalism and difference, it undermines this goal by prescribing a narrow style of conversation that privileges rational, analytical debate oriented towards consensus. In what follows, I introduce a second strand of critical thought in international politics—poststructuralism—which is much more successful in articulating societal critique.

Poststructural International Political Thought

In this section, I argue that poststructural approaches to suffering in world politics address many of the shortcomings of liberal cosmopolitan and Habermasian political theory: they emphasise the fragility of moral progress; they focus attention on particular suffering instead of seeking universal truth; and they acknowledge the role of emotion in the politics of violence. A concern with the political leads poststructural international theorists to question settled assumptions about world politics, emphasising the contingency and violence of existing social arrangements and practices, and points to the need to give voice to those who are deemed 'other' or different. In this sense, poststructuralism has similar goals to Habermasian critical theory, which also purports to look beyond the *status quo* to structures of power and attempts to integrate the 'other' into widening political communities by dialogue with the radically different. However, the two strands of critical thought have very different approaches. Habermasian theories advocate a cosmopolitan agenda of reaching for universally acceptable guidelines for living in the pursuit of justice, whereas poststructural theories reject the notion of an underlying consensus grounded in the notion of humanity or in the common experience of suffering.[83] For poststructuralism, suffering is not valued as a means to ground problem-solving theory; instead, it is valued in and of itself, as a pointer to the traumatic real that lies beneath the surface of modernity. Furthermore, although Habermasian theories have the stated goal of the inclusion of the other,[84] this is undermined by the nature of debate and its search for a rational consensus on what

[83] Rather than using suffering to ground a cosmopolitan ethic as Linklater does in his recent work on harm.
[84] Jürgen Habermas, *The Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory*, Ciaran Cronin and Pablo De Grieff (eds.) (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1998).

constitutes the better argument. In contrast, poststructural theorists tend to resist attempts at incorporation and domestication, advocating an uncovering and celebration of alterity and difference. In what follows, I give a brief overview of the origins and trajectory of poststructural thought, before discussing the ways in which it has influenced certain strands of critical international theory—encouraging the questioning of settled assumptions and a concern with identity and difference.

Poststructuralism emerged as a response to the structuralist movement. Structuralists such as Claude Lévi-Strauss and Jacques Lacan conceive of society as a coherent system comprised of constituent social phenomena whose interrelations are governed by underlying rules. Furthermore, they maintain that the organisational rules of the system can be uncovered and known through rigorous structural analysis. Structuralism claims for itself a scientific approach to the social world that dispenses with subjectivity, claiming that the subject is constituted by the system and therefore that the subject can effectively be removed from analysis. It draws heavily on the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, whose semiotic theory characterises language as a system of signs that convey meaning. Within this system, de Saussure distinguishes between two parts: the signifier, the visible and audible element, and the signified, the conceptual element. A poststructural critique opposes structuralism on a number of grounds, arguing that it abstracts from real human experience and fails to see historical and cultural variations in meaning. Both positions reject the notion of an autonomous subject; however, a poststructural view perceives the subject as constituted not by a unified, stable system (as in structuralism) but instead stresses the arbitrary and shifting nature of social experience and meaning. Poststructuralism rejects the basic assumptions of modern philosophy, maintaining that there is no absolute foundation for

knowledge and that those oppositions that are taken for granted in traditional metaphysics (subject and object, noumenal and phenomenal) are in fact violent hierarchies of values that suppress the less valued term.[85]

Unlike Habermasian international theory, which appropriates and responds to the (later) work of Habermas and is therefore relatively unified in its approach, poststructural international theory borrows from a number of thinkers who articulate their critique of modernity in varying ways. However, despite significant differences between the varieties of poststructural thought, at the centre of their approach to world politics is a concern with the political. Jenny Edkins characterises the political as an arena in which social givens are not taken for granted and the possibility of thinking and being otherwise, of transgressing accepted boundaries, is explored. It operates at a much more fundamental level than politics: '[it] has to do with the establishment of that very social order which sets out a particular, historically specific account of what counts as politics and defines other areas of social life as *not* politics'.[86] The everyday technical business of *politics* (including elections, government, and diplomacy) distracts from the struggles of the *political*. We are 'confined…to activity within the boundaries set by existing social and international orders, and our criticism is restricted to the technical arrangements that make up the "politics" within which we exist as "subjects" of the state. The political subject and the

[85] See Ashley, 'The Poverty of Neorealism', pp. 233-237; Steven Best and Douglas Kellner, *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1991), pp. 1-33; Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, pp. 23-26. In 'The Poverty of Neorealism', Ashley highlights the way that structuralism is utilised by neorealists in their reworking of classical realism, which they deem insufficiently scientific.
[86] Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 2.

international subject, too, are safely caged and their teeth pulled'.[87] Politics depoliticises, drawing us away from political struggle and towards instrumental calculation.

A concern for the political is central for both Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, despite their different approaches to critique. Derrida is particularly concerned with language and writing, and the ways in which hierarchies of terms suppress and exclude the other, while Foucault is more concerned with power as it operates in historical and sociological terms. For both thinkers, reflections on questions of justice and the ethical are enormously important and, as such, both have profoundly influenced critical international political thought concerned with suffering in world politics. Derrida advocates *deconstruction* in response to the brokenness of modernity, maintaining that disturbing and unsettling settled hierarchies leads to the inherently political moment of decision. In his reflections on the relationship between deconstruction and justice, Derrida points to the founding violence of the law and the impossibility of justice.[88] He points to the necessary 'ordeal of the undecidable'—engaging in the process of making an impossible decision—but argues that it is impossible for any decision to be fully just:

> either [the decision] has not yet been made according to a rule, and nothing allows us to call it just, or it has already followed a rule—whether received, confirmed, conserved or reinvented—which in its turn is not absolutely guaranteed by anything; and, moreover, if it were guaranteed, the decision would be reduced to calculation and we couldn't call it just.[89]

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[87] Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 9.
[88] Jacques Derrida, 'Force of Law: The "Mystical Foundation of Authority"', in Drucilla Cornell, Michel Rosenfeld and David Gray Carlson, *Deconstruction and The Possibility of Justice* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 3-67.
[89] Derrida, 'Force of Law', p. 24.

For Derrida, this moment of decision is the moment of the political; it is undergoing this process that marks the political from the instrumental. Foucault's critique of modernity takes a rather different approach, emphasising the historical contingency of existing social and political arrangements. Like the Frankfurt School, he is critical of Enlightenment thought for promoting new forms of oppression in the name of freedom, and he advocates political resistance to the dominance of the *status quo*.[90] According to Foucault, political change arises from widely dispersed, localised struggles against 'micropowers' that will eventually have an effect on the whole.[91]

Questioning Settled Assumptions

Poststructural approaches to violence in world politics emphasise the contingency of existing social arrangements, asking why they exist and how they might be challenged. In this way, they are *critical*, in Cox's sense, not taking the world as it is, but asking *why* and *how* current social arrangements and practices are accepted as normal and desirable.[92] In international political thought, this has led poststructural theorists to question both the dominant state-system and the emerging post-Westphalian liberal-democratic order championed by Habermas and his followers.

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[90] Indeed, Foucault remarks that if he had come across the writings of the Frankfurt School earlier in his life, 'I would have avoided many of the detours which I made while trying to pursue my own humble path—when, meanwhile, avenues had been opened up by the Frankfurt School. It is a strange case of non-penetration between two very similar types of thinking which is explained, perhaps, by that very similarity'. Michel Foucault, *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, Laurence D. Kritzman (ed.) (New York: Routledge, 1988), p. 26.
[91] Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader: An introduction to Foucault's thought* (London: Penguin Books, 1984), p. 174.
[92] Cox, 'Social Forces, States and World Orders'.

The problematisation of the state is a key theme in poststructural thought. In contemporary world politics, there is a forgetting of the historically-specific violence with which states come into being and the right to defend borders with violence is seen as right and acceptable.[93] William Connolly argues that the state goes to unacceptable lengths to protect its sovereignty, refusing to accept its limitations and demonising that which challenges it. He portrays the democratic territorial state as a paradoxical site of liberation and imprisonment.[94] It liberates in that it gives (some) people a voice and encourages government to heed those voices in light of their electoral power. But it also imprisons in that it suppresses minority voices in an effort to promote general, settled norms. This desire to protect state sovereignty often gives rise to a 'politics of forgetting'[95] whereby those actions and attitudes incoherent with a state's perception of itself are concealed. For example, the medicalisation of traumatised military personnel ensures concurrent depoliticisation in order to prevent questioning that might threaten the state's use of violence.[96]

Alongside a poststructural problematisation of the state is a questioning of the emerging post-Westphalian order advocated by critical thinkers such as Habermas and Linklater. David Campbell argues that their liberal cosmopolitanism radically underestimates the moral complexity of crises and that the 'pursuit of moral criteria to establish normative principles that

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[93] See, for example, Jenny Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 6; Jabri, 'Solidarity and spheres of culture'.
[94] Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, p. 152.
[95] Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization*, p. 138.
[96] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*; Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds'.

would separate the "good" from the "bad"' is untenable.[97] The Habermasian pursuit of settled norms is grounded on a metaphysical humanism; however, this humanism is 'not sufficiently human'.[98] Connolly agrees, maintaining that settled codes based on transcendent truths are not only insufficiently human, but actively dangerous: 'systematic cruelty flows regularly from the thoughtlessness of aggressive conventionality, the transcendentalization of contingent identities, and the treatment of good/evil as a duality wired into the intrinsic order of things'.[99] The metaphysical humanism upon which cosmopolitanism is grounded is a 'transcendental egoism':[100] egoistic, because it extracts embedded truths from particular traditions and insists that they apply without question to all, and transcendental, because it insists on its grounding in an accessible underlying consensus or higher law that can be identified as true.

Vivienne Jabri also maintains that Linklater's call for the 'transformation of political community' fails to live up to its critical, emancipatory goals.[101] Although it purports to encourage dialogue between the radically different, in reality, the post-Westphalian project is a political and moral *ordering* of individuals and institutions. Jabri points to historical evidence of such ordering, namely colonial and post-colonial dispossession of indigenous peoples in the name of progress and civilisation. She maintains that a key problem with the cosmopolitan project is 'a certain dislocation from history'; this allows its advocates distance from the concrete realities of violence and suffering that accompany interventions wielded in the name of

[97] Campbell, 'Why Fight: Humanitarianism, Principles, and Post-structuralism', p. 503.
[98] Emannuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. A. Lingis (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff Publishers, 1981), p. 127, cited in Campbell, 'Why Fight', p. 507.
[99] William Connolly, 'Beyond Good and Evil: The Ethical Sensibility of Michel Foucault', *Political Theory*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (1993), p. 366.
[100] Connolly, 'Beyond Good and Evil', p. 368.
[101] Jabri, 'Solidarity and spheres of culture', pp. 715-728

cosmopolitan justice.[102] It is in the historical specificities of the modern project that political reality challenges closely-held normative assumptions.

Jabri draws on the work of Michel Foucault to call into question accepted practices of humanitarian intervention in the face of suffering.[103] According to Foucault, every society creates 'regimes of truth' that both generate and are sustained by power structures.[104] The human rights regime is one such regime of truth, sustaining fundamental hierarchies built into the liberal cosmopolitan project—hierarchies that facilitate the use of violent force by liberal democratic states in the name of emancipation. Paradoxically, the sovereignty of liberal democratic states is reinforced as they intervene in the name of human rights and a post-Westphalian liberal order.[105] Jabri reflects on the discourses of 'truth' that are produced in the lead up to war, noting that there is rarely room for uncertainty or doubt as to the motivations for invasion or the means that will be employed:

> The war against Serbia, the war in Afghanistan, the invasion of Iraq, are represented in discourse as humanitarian wars and as such those conducting war confer to themselves not just righteousness and authority, but the right of judgement and articulation. Opposition to war is represented as a discourse of complacency and, at worse, as complicitous appeasement of tyranny.[106]

To think critically in a time of war is to reject this attitude of righteous superiority and moral certitude and to engage in the political practice of 'thinking otherwise'.

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[102] Jabri, 'Solidarity and spheres of culture', p. 722.
[103] Vivienne Jabri, 'Critical Thought and Political Agency in Time of War', *International Relations,* Vol. 19, No. 1 (2005), pp. 70-78; Campbell, 'Why Fight'.
[104] Rabinow , *The Foucault Reader*, pp. 74-75.
[105] Jabri, 'Solidarity and spheres of culture', p. 722.
[106] Jabri, 'Critical Thought and Political Agency in Time of War', p. 72.

Identity/Difference

A related theme in poststructural thought is a concern with alterity, with those regarded as 'other'. Disturbing settled concepts vis-à-vis the state and liberal cosmopolitanism encourages a broader conception of identity, where political subjects identify not only or even primarily as citizens of a territorial state, but as members of diverse groups. Poststructural theorists call for a politics of responsibility, and, in particular, political action on behalf of marginalised groups. Campbell maintains that for Foucault, 'the overriding concern is *the struggle for—or on behalf of—alterity rather than a struggle to efface, erase, or eradicate alterity*'.[107] A states-based or liberal cosmopolitan system is seen as erasing alterity by presenting subjects as homogeneous citizens, be it of a particular state or of a globalised world. Foucault's notion of an inescapable responsibility for the other is an 'ethically transcendent' principle—not prescriptively universal, but a 'new form of universality that does not rely on any a priori sense of essential sameness'.[108] He advocates a different form of solidarity, one that aims to disturb the moral hierarchies of the liberal cosmopolitan project.

Campbell argues that the interface between identity and difference is central to the modern condition, but that it is also unstable and shifting:

> our condition can be characterised by the problematic of identity/difference, where neither term can be understood except in relation to the other, and because of which claims about secure identities, traditionally authorised grounds, and the political

[107] Campbell, 'Why Fight', p. 513, emphasis in original.
[108] Campbell, 'Why Fight', p. 516.

> necessities said to flow from them are met with a critical scepticism, even as they have to be invoked and rearticulated in responding to summons of alterity.[109]

A concern with difference challenges prevalent notions about politically relevant identities; one's political identification need not be limited to being a citizen of a state. However, the relationship between identity and difference is complex; in challenging the notion of stable identities and related political obligations in order to support difference and alterity, one is simultaneously invoking the notion of identity, albeit of a different form.

A theoretical concern with alterity and difference has a strong affinity with the identity politics movements of the 1980s and 1990s, when a distrust of grand narratives led those on the Left away from a focus on class struggle and economic exploitation and towards a concern with recognition, particularly of marginalised groups. Broad political projects with grand narratives, such as Marxism, were seen as suppressing particularity, just as a states-based political system suppressed difference. Advocates of identity politics encouraged collective action in the form of affirmative action and an increased sensitivity to difference in language.[110] But, as we shall see, it also shifted focus from broader issues such as economic marginalisation and redistribution of resources, and it has led to the reification of identity, oversimplifying its complexity and multiplicity.[111]

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[109] Campbell, 'Why Fight', p. 509.
[110] Benjamin Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism: Difference, Populism, Revolution, Agitation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), p. 12
[111] Fraser, 'Rethinking Recognition', p. 108.

Poststructuralism: Shortcomings

A poststructural approach to thinking about world politics disturbs settled assumptions and established hierarchies in a sophisticated and challenging way. However, in unsettling settled hierarchies there is a tendency to overemphasise the previously neglected side of a hierarchy to the detriment of its other. Susannah Radstone argues that the deconstruction of binaries, such as private and public, individual and social, was intended to challenge dominant approaches to scholarship but that it has led to a 'slippage in theory that leads from an initial questioning of binaries to a focus on only one side of the pair'.[112] In this section, I point to three areas in which the deconstruction of binaries has led to an imbalanced emphasis. I argue that a focus on recognition displaces concern with economic injustice; a focus on the particular displaces attention from public and institutional fora; and a focus on encircling the 'traumatic real' displaces attention from the relief of real-world suffering and can lead to passive melancholy.

The narrow focus on identity and difference in certain strands of poststructural thought has displaced attention from broader issues such as class and economic marginalisation. Benjamin Arditi illustrates this problem with reference to the metaphor of a walking stick that Lenin is purported to have used: in order to straighten it, one needs to bend the handle in the opposite direction; however, there is always a risk that one will apply too much or too little pressure. Arditi maintains that in identity politics, too much pressure has been applied: 'The radicalization of the critique of grand narratives and the relentless vindication of particularism served to part ways with, say, the class reduction of Marxism, but it also turned the question of difference into

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[112] Susannah Radstone, 'Reconceiving Binaries: The Limits of Memory', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 59, No. 1 (2005), p. 140.

something akin to the essentialism of the totality it criticized'.[113] This overcorrection has distracted attention from economic structures and from the issue of redistribution, which are perceived as totalising, homogenising narratives that distract from difference and particularity.

As well as distracting from underlying economic structures through the reification of identity, a focus on identity politics can have a negative cultural and political backlash—what Arditi terms the 'underside of difference'. The destabilisation of identity and proliferation of alternative modes of being is heralded as emancipatory and progressive; however, the link between difference and emancipation is by no means certain. Indeed, many people feel threatened by the increasing complexity of a postmodern world, in which options abound. Arditi argues that one particularly worrying response is a turn to fundamentalism, where simple answers provide assurance and a sense of stability in an uncertain world.[114] Other problematic responses include apathy and retreat from the public sphere,[115] and an indefinite deferral of judgment out of respect for multiplicity and difference.[116] He argues that at the root of the underside of difference is an emphasis on particularity that devalues universality whilst simultaneously attempting to invoke the category of universal rights:

> the emphasis on particularity…leads to an ambiguous understanding of the 'goodness' of difference and the universality of universals. But it is a deceptive forgetfulness, for the very idea of pure self-referential particularity is inconsistent, if only because the dispute about the status of dialects is enounced through the language of rights.[117]

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[113] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 13.
[114] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 27.
[115] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 25.
[116] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 31.
[117] Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, p. 37.

An overemphasis on the particular can also exclude consideration of public and institutional forms of political struggle. In a discussion on the politics of memory, Radstone argues that the emphasis on individual suffering and trauma stories has led to the displacement of political and historical categories in memory and trauma studies. She argues that there is a need to revisit the maxim 'the personal is political', taking into account 'the complex relations between memory and the wider social and public spheres within which it is given meaning, screened, recognized and misrecognized'.[118] The wholesale devaluation of the universal and of public and institutional categories hinders analysis of global suffering, which is more than the sum of individual experiences and cannot be understood without also examining social and historical context.

A related critique of poststructural thought is that the desire to avoid domestication and depoliticisation can, paradoxically, put limits on actual political struggle. Edkins relates Derrida's notion of undecidability and impossible justice to Slavoj Žižek's notion of the traumatic 'real' and the impossibility of closure. According to Žižek, all attempts to create a meaningful social system use ideology to obscure the 'real'. Žižek maintains that to act politically is to 'occupy the place of the lack',[119] pointing to the unreality of the constructed order and accepted discourses of truth. He advocates a repeated 'encircling' of the traumatic real, a refusal to fall prey to the politics of forgetting.[120] Edkins draws on Žižek's critique of ideology in her reflections on September 11, noting:

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[118] Radstone, 'Reconceiving Binaries', p.148.
[119] Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 13.
[120] Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, p. 140-142.

> The lesson of trauma is that what we call social reality is grounded in a series of stories we tell ourselves. Trauma demonstrates that these narratives—about the strength and invulnerability of the state, about the security and protection it can give, and about the way in which lives lost are lives sacrificed for a greater cause—cannot prevent catastrophe.[121]

In response to such a traumatic interruption to social reality, Edkins advocates a repeated marking of the site and a refusal to forget. Such a response cries out against the premature closure of wounds and acknowledges the profound challenges that traumatic events present to accepted social arrangements. However, such an approach to social reality and its inevitable traumas can result in a failure to integrate it into a broader historical context and can prevent eventual working through, for fear of domesticating or 'gentrifying' the moment of the real. There is a tension to be negotiated between encircling or marking the real, in Žižek's terms, and relieving suffering; it is important that those who have suffered are not prevented from bearing witness and questioning accepted categories in the wake of trauma, but it is also important that 'not forgetting' does not become an endless melancholy from which there is no escape, and which may itself depoliticise.[122]

Conclusion

The critical turn in international political thought emerged as a response to the perceived poverty of liberal ethics, with Habermasian critical theory and poststructuralism being the most

[121] Jenny Edkins, 'Forget Trauma? Responses to September 11', *International Relations*, Vol. 16, No. 2 (2002), p. 253.

[122] See Chapter Four for Gillian Rose's critique of Walter Benjamin's endless melancholy which, she maintains, prevents working through, and Chapter Five for my discussion on working through trauma in global politics.

prominent strands of critical international theory. I have argued that these offer a more embedded approach to world politics, but that significant limits remain. Habermasian theory remains wedded to a form of problem-solving theory and thus loses its critical edge, while poststructural theory overemphasises personal and particular aspects of human experience at the expense of communal and universal categories.

According to Habermasian critical theory, the project of modernity remains unfinished and its emancipatory potential can prevail over its dark side. However, it still falls prey to many of the limitations of liberal ethics, giving precedence to public and universal categories and abstracting from particularity. Even its more nuanced versions, such as those put forward by Benhabib and Fraser, continue to remain wedded to a strong version of moral progress and to emphasise rational argument that abstracts from historical context and disallows narrative and emotive conversational styles.

Poststructural approaches, in contrast, deepen a critique of liberal approaches to justice: they draw attention to particular suffering and the contingencies of accepted social orders, be it the Westphalian state system or the emerging post-Westphalian order. They also point to the traumatic real, to the violence underlying accepted social arrangements. However, in challenging established truths and deconstructing binary opposites, there is a tendency in some versions of poststructural thought to over-emphasise one side of the binary pair (private rather than public, particular rather than universal). There is also a fixation with 'marking the lack' rather than working through. Paradoxically, this can lead to a depoliticisation in the name of politicisation.

This chapter, then, examines the two major critical strands of International Relations theory and judges them both unsatisfactory. Having set up this dilemma in Part One of the thesis, I turn in Part Two to an exposition of critical theory in the tradition of the early Frankfurt School, which offers a speculative understanding of suffering in world politics that enables societal critique and gestures toward alternative ways of being in the world.

PART TWO

INTRODUCTION

The first part of this thesis contained a critical review of the most well-known mainstream and critical strands of international ethics. I now move on to deepen and consolidate that critique by exposing its roots in an alternative tradition of thought, the tradition of early Frankfurt School critical theory, and pointing towards a more appropriate, positive response to suffering.

I begin with Adorno's critique of Enlightenment, which informs much of what I had to say in Part One about the tendency towards abstract universalism and instrumentalism in liberal, and to a lesser extent, Habermasian thought. Adorno's thought contains some echoes of the poststructural emphasis on the importance of concrete particularity, the profoundly personal nature of lived suffering. A fuller appreciation of suffering serves as an important corrective to tendencies towards universality, abstraction, instrumentalism and an over-developed sense of progress that characterise liberal and Habermasian thought. The reductive instrumental rationality of Enlightenment thought delivers repression in the name of freedom and shuts down social critique. Suffering plays a central role in Adorno's challenge to this tradition. It grounds a negative dialectics, which seeks to cling to the particular and the non-identical in an attempt to challenge the instrumentalism of Enlightenment thought. However, Adorno also refuses to succumb to the solipsist tendencies of poststructuralism whose fragmentary approach rejects broader social categories. Instead, he asserts the importance of mediation between subject and object, thought and being, particular and universal. The purpose of negative dialectics is to

preserve space, within the totalising impact of Enlightenment thought, for a metaphysics of hope, a conception of promise that can operate as a counter to bleak reality in order to guard against despair and inaction.

Adorno, famously, did little to flesh out what this kind of hope or promise might look like, though some fragmentary ideas can be gleaned from his writings on art and education. However, other writers have drawn on Adorno's legacy in ways that move his approach forward. In Chapter Four I consider one of these thinkers, Gillian Rose. There are strong overlaps between Rose and Adorno's work. As in Adorno's writings, Rose's thought is rooted in an acute awareness of suffering and a refusal to take refuge in simple answers and generalities (as in modern ethics) or in resignation and exclusive particularity (as in much poststructural thought). However, in contrast with Adorno's work, Rose's main adversary is postmodernism. Rose is annihilatingly critical of postmodern thought, arguing that its refusal to negotiate binary oppositions is an avoidance of the *work* of social theory, which requires a constant struggle to know and understand. Rose points to the (historical and existential) trauma inherent in so much of human experience, and argues that unless these traumas are worked through, they can exert profound societal damage. For Rose, the process of working through involves inaugurated mourning, which entails a struggle to know and to be known. She juxtaposes this concept of mourning against the postmodern tendency to take refuge in melancholy, refusing to work through trauma for fear of domesticating the real. Rose maintains that endless melancholy depoliticises. Traumatic experiences must be worked through in order to facilitate constructive political engagement, so as to avoid the political withdrawal or search for revenge that is so often

the legacy of trauma. The relationship between particular suffering and the broader political and social order, then, is a dialectical one.

In chapter five, I support Rose and Adorno's arguments, and draw out some of their potential implications for dealing with trauma and violence, through an engagement with literature on the concrete historical experience of trauma and world politics. I argue that the disasters of modernity—political violence, extreme poverty, displacement—engender unspeakable suffering for countless millions and that any analysis of global society cannot ignore the category of trauma. A more nuanced understanding of trauma enhances our understanding of world politics, pointing to the contingency of social arrangements and to the dangers of unhealed trauma, and also challenges us to think and respond differently to suffering. I examine two broad responses to trauma: acting out and working through. Individuals and communities who act out repetitively relive their traumatic experience(s), trapped in the past that so deeply wounded them. In order to make sense of their experience, they take refuge in meaning-making narratives, painting the world in simplistic terms of good and evil and, at times, finding purpose in a search for revenge. Acting out in response to trauma is *euporia*, the easy way. Working through, in contrast, requires struggle: unflinching, painful reflection on the particular traumatic experience and on the wider implications for society. It involves reflection on the particular to illuminate broader social processes and gradually enables constructive political reengagement. In Rose's terms, working through involves knowing and being known; the being known requires that narratives of suffering are attended to and learned from—a defiant rejection of the solipsistic individualism of so much of modern society.

Overall, I point to a different way of thinking about violence and suffering. I advocate a return to critical theory in the tradition of the early Frankfurt School: *social* theory that looks beyond immediate problems to the historical, social, and psychological processes that preceded them and seeks a deeper, critical understanding before rushing forward with quick-fix solutions. I advocate the creation of public fora for critical self-reflection and discussion, but of a different kind to that advocated by Habermasian theorists. Rather than adversarial debate with rational consensus (Habermas) or understanding (Benhabib) as its goal, I argue that what is needed is an opportunity for stories to be told and, above all, listened to, so that they might challenge those closely-held beliefs and practices that damage ourselves and others. Such an approach does not reject the notion of moral progress, but perceives its fragility and maintains that a notion of progress is more useful as a counter to distressing reality than as the perceived inevitable result of following good guidelines for living. Nor does it reject reason, although it refuses to accept an instrumental rationality that seeks measurable, generalisable solutions to easily-identifiable problems. Theory in this tradition has a speculative Hegelian core: it takes concepts such as universality and particularity, public and private, identity and difference, and attempts to hold them together in thought and practice, seeking to understand how they are mediated by one another. Where Habermasian critical theory effectively reinforces the traditional hierarchies of binary opposites in Western metaphysics, privileging abstract universals over particulars, and poststructuralism privileges the previously neglected side of the pair, emphasising the particular over the universal, a speculative critical theory insists upon the negotiation of both, interrogating the ways in which they illuminate each other whilst also acknowledging their refusal of the other. Above all, it does not take refuge in 'the cowardice of abstract thought' that 'shuns the sensuous

present in monkish fashion',[1] but attends to suffering, creating space for giving voice to bodily and psychological pain.[2] This attention to concrete particularity helps us to understand more general societal processes in turn, providing a comprehensive analysis of society and gesturing to possibilities for its transformation.

[1] Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion III*, trans. E. B. Spiers and J. B. Sanderson (New York: The Humanities Press, 1962), p. 101, cited in Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 78.
[2] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 203.

CHAPTER THREE

ADORNO, SUFFERING, AND PROMISE

In this chapter, I turn to the early Frankfurt School of critical theory and argue that it offers a more sensitive and balanced approach to violence and suffering in world politics than that proffered by Habermasian or poststructural theories. Although a number of thinkers outside International Relations theory are drawing on the early Frankfurt School as an alternative to mainstream contemporary ethics,[3] it remains under-explored in International Relations. I focus primarily on the thought of Theodor W. Adorno, one of its most prominent intellectuals, and argue that his approach to suffering is more attuned to concrete human experience and the difficulty of positive intervention in a culture so wedded to the *status quo* than the approach of the later Frankfurt School. He advocates the situating of bleak reality in historical and social context, not forgetting immediate pain but also looking beyond this to its complex and often hidden antecedents. Alongside this sensitivity to human suffering, Adorno holds firm to a utopian hope in the possibility of reconciliation, a sense of future promise that keeps despair and resignation at bay. I argue that Adorno's negative dialectics provide a more convincing analysis

[3] See, for example, Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*; Geuss, *Outside Ethics*; Martin Jay, *Refractions of Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

of society than the critical alternatives that sound loudest in international political thought: Habermasian and poststructural theory.

Adorno's critical theory falls quite deliberately 'outside' contemporary, problem-solving ethics. He abhors the instrumental rationality of modern ethical thought; his critique of Enlightenment thinking offers a powerful corrective to the abstractions of normative international political theory.[4] His work also offers a profound challenge to Habermasian discourse ethics, tempering the pursuit of emancipation with attention to particular suffering. Habermas maintains that an increasingly discursive society marked by public 'argumentation' is unambiguously positive; Adorno does not, seeing it as requiring careful management and pointing to the difficulty of rational debate after traumatic experience. Habermas also puts forward the ideal of 'consensus', reached by open, rational communication, as being something to aspire to. Adorno, in contrast, believes that consensus is more likely to lead to conformism than to a free and open society and points to the importance of critical reflection and the preservation of alternatives to the *status quo*.[5]

Adorno's work also offers a challenge to poststructural theory. Although his approach has strong affinities with poststructuralism, with its emphasis on concrete particularity as a correction to historical progressivism, his dialectical approach means that he also attends to broader social processes and institutions and the ways in which these constitute (and are

[4] For an excellent book dealing with the 'ethical' dimensions of Adorno's thought, see Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*.
[5] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (London: Verso 1974/2005), §§ 44, 50, 93; Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 236, fn. 10.

constituted by) particularity. He also continues to hold fast to Enlightenment ideals and the utopian hope that things might yet get better, arguing that to reject these would be to take refuge in despair and resignation and prevent analysis of totalising repression under modernity. He argues that what ails society is not too much Enlightenment but too little and that critical intellectuals have a responsibility to enlighten Enlightenment through attention both to particularity and to social structures.

My exposition of Adorno's work deepens my earlier critique of liberal approaches to violence and suffering and gestures towards an alternative approach to international political thought. I begin by briefly situating Adorno in the context of the early Frankfurt School before discussing his critique of modernity, noting his debts to Hegel and Marx. I then examine his response to pervasive suffering under modernity, which is twofold: to enlighten Enlightenment with attention to suffering and particularity, and to gesture towards a metaphysics of hope. I argue that his negative dialectics offer a way of negotiating binary opposites that does not fall into the violent hierarchies of modern philosophy, or into the inversion of those hierarchies in poststructural thought, and that his notion of promise keeps despair at bay despite pervasive suffering.

Adorno and the Critique of Enlightenment

The Frankfurt Institute for Social Research facilitated the development of the strand of post-Marxist thought known as the 'Frankfurt School' of critical theory, providing the forum and the

means for interdisciplinary social research.[6] The Institute was established in 1923 at the prompting of Felix Weil, the son of an affluent merchant. Weil obtained the means to found and support the Institute so that it might be independent from any demands the Academy or government might otherwise exercise; although there was a formal link to the University of Frankfurt, the Institute was able to remain essentially autonomous.

The first director of the Institute, Carl Grünberg, was a staunch Marxist for whom the purpose of the Institute was to promote a Marxism that challenged the *status quo* without seeking absolutes. Although these Marxist roots continued to be influential, the unimaginative methodologies linked with the strongly Marxist bent of the early years were soon challenged by Max Horkheimer, who followed Grünberg as director from 1931. Those with orthodox Marxist leanings were criticised for overemphasising the economic substructure of society and neglecting other important realities.[7] Two tenets of Marxism in particular were abandoned: the concept that economic life was central and social life epiphenomenal; and the concept that societal development was heading in a positive direction.

Horkheimer was an enormously influential director who attracted an outstanding group of thinkers to the Institute. He actively encouraged a multidisciplinary approach that drew on philosophical and social theory alongside social scientific research. In his inaugural address to the Institute, he spoke of the need to work together to broaden the focus of social research:

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[6] See the following book for a detailed account of the genesis of the Frankfurt School: Martin Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School and the Institute of Social Research, 1923-1950* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1973).
[7] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 55.

> Today…all depends on organizing research around current philosophical problematics which, in turn, philosophers, sociologists, political economists, historians, and psychologists engage by joining enduring research groups in order to do together what in other areas one is able to do alone in the laboratory and what all true scientists have always done: namely, to pursue their philosophical questions directed at the big picture with the finest scientific methods, to transform and to make more precise these questions as the work progresses, to find new methods, and yet never to lose sight of the whole.[8]

Horkheimer did not seek solutions to these 'philosophical problematics' with multidisciplinary research, but he hoped that greater understanding of society would 'serve the truth'[9] and lead to its gradual transformation.

Adorno's friendship with Horkheimer brought him into contact with the Institute, which he was loosely associated with from 1928, and he soon became one of its most prominent intellectuals. Adorno was born in 1903, and grew up in Frankfurt, where he also undertook his university studies. He spent three years in Vienna from 1925-1928, studying composition under Alban Berg, during which time he became a part of the culturally avant-garde circles around Arnold Schoenberg and Karl Kraus. This period instilled in him an appreciation of high culture that never mellowed and that has invited criticism by those who consider his writings to be elitist, self-indulgent, and apolitical.[10] After returning to Frankfurt, he wrote *Kierkegaard:*

[8] Max Horkheimer, 'The State of Contemporary Social Philosophy', in Stephen Eric Bronner and Douglas MacKay Kellner (eds.), *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 32.
[9] Horkheimer, 'Contemporary Social Philosophy', p. 36.
[10] This is particularly the case in postmodern critiques of Adorno's writings on culture. See, for example, the critique of Adorno in Jim Collins, *Uncommon Cultures: Popular Culture and Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989). For a discussion (and refutation) of the popular designation of Adorno as elitist and therefore unworthy of sustained engagement, see Calvin Thomas, 'A Knowledge That Would Not Be Power: Adorno, Nostalgia, and the Historicity of the Musical Subject', *New German Critique*, Vol. 48 (1989), pp. 155-175.

Construction of the Aesthetic, which was submitted as a *Habilitationsschrift* in 1931 and published as a book in 1933, on the day that Hitler took office.[11]

The place of the critical intellectual in Germany became tenuous after the Nazi rise to power. The Institute was doubly unwelcome, being both Marxist and staffed by individuals of Jewish descent; it was soon accused of exhibiting 'tendencies hostile to the state' and forced into exile.[12] The locus of the group shifted initially to Geneva, with other centres in Paris and London, and later to New York, where it established links with Columbia University. Adorno spent the first four years studying in Oxford, before joining the others in the United States and officially joining the Institute in 1938. Throughout these years, the Institute's journal *Zeitschrift Fur Sozialforschung* continued to be published (in Leipzig, Paris, and then New York), which provided a continuity and sense of community for the group, despite their exile. The Institute remained in exile until 1950, when it returned to Frankfurt.

Adorno was a major figure in the early Frankfurt School. Indeed, he was the only member of the Institute to influence Horkheimer as strongly as Horkheimer did him.[13] His writings are notoriously complex and cover a wide range of subject matter: aesthetics, musicology, sociology, cultural studies, literature and philosophy. However, at the heart of his work is a critique of Enlightenment thinking, a concern that he shared with Horkheimer and other early Frankfurt School theorists. He maintains that the Enlightenment project has been usurped by an obsession

[11] Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (University of Minnesota Press, 1989).
[12] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 29.
[13] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 289.

with instrumental rationality; 'progress' has brought new means of enslavement rather than the promised liberation. Adorno's critique of Enlightenment thinking is profoundly influenced by his readings of Marx and Hegel. He draws on Marx's theory of value, but rejects his emphasis on the analysis of production as the basis upon which to understand society. He also draws on Marx and Engel's critique of Hegel; however, his debt to Hegel goes beyond a Marxist interpretation, inspiring his negative dialectics as well as his reflections on hope. In the remainder of this section, I trace the influence of Marx and Hegel on the development of his critique of Enlightenment thought.

For the early Frankfurt School, Enlightenment thinking is committed to a group of values that includes 'first of all, a substantive commitment to certain principles of humanity, noncoercion, rationality, the right of individuals to pursue their happiness; second, a particular view about how these goals can best be attained, namely by the systemic pursuit and implementation of a certain kind of knowledge'.[14] Adorno does not advocate that we turn our back upon Enlightenment ideals; on the contrary, he notes that 'reification of life results not from too much enlightenment but too little'[15] and argues that it would be barbaric to 'wipe away the whole [of Enlightenment thought] with a sponge'.[16] However, he abhors the type of knowledge with which these ideals are pursued.

Enlightenment knowledge has three major properties: first, knowledge is held to be enhanced when objects or things can be subsumed into a general concept and where the constituent things

[14] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 164.
[15] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 24.
[16] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 32.

may substituted for one another; second, it is held to be instrumental, that is, useful for the organisation and control of the environment; and third, any 'meaning' must be related to the identifying, instrumental nature of what is known.[17] It prescribes *useful* solutions that will benefit user groups, and leads to a hyper-rationalist or problem-solving ethics. Adorno is highly critical of such a shift in thinking, noting that '[no] notion dares to be conceived any more which does not cheerfully include, in all camps, explicit instructions as to who its beneficiaries are'.[18]

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Horkheimer maintain that the desire for ever-increasing control that springs from the pursuit of Enlightenment knowledge works against the attainment of Enlightenment ideals.[19] The Enlightenment has stripped reason of rational *ideals* and reduced human interaction to power relationships and economic transactions. This assertion draws on Marx's theory of value, which states that capitalism depends upon exchange value, whereby commodities have no intrinsic value apart from what they are worth on the market.[20] Adorno asserts that under modernity, human beings are treated as commodities: substitutable entities valued merely for their instrumental uses or ability to command market resources; even where commodification is resisted, the overriding pull of society is toward the *status quo* and those forms that are valued by society. The mind thus shapes itself into socially acceptable, marketable forms and freedom becomes an illusion, made all the more dangerous and difficult to resist because of the appearance of freedom. This is not the fault of Enlightenment ideals as such, but the instrumental use of these ideals in the promotion of a rational, efficient system:

[17] Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, p. 164.
[18] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 29.
[19] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment.*
[20] The fullest discussion is contained in Karl Marx, *Capital: Critique of Political Economy Vol. 1*, trans. B. Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990).

‘The network of the whole is drawn ever tighter, modelled after the act of exchange’.[21] The driving force in society that Adorno and Horkheimer term the ‘culture industry’[22] has numbed individuality and creativity: ‘[the spirit] cannot survive where it is fixed as a cultural commodity and doled out to satisfy consumer needs. The flood of detailed information and candy-floss entertainment simultaneously instructs and stultifies mankind’.[23] In such an atmosphere, social criticism becomes extraordinarily difficult; where worth is determined in terms of exchange, categories such as beauty and social worth become null and void, and things in themselves, including human beings and the natural world, lose their inherent value.

Adorno maintains that the repression of humankind under Enlightenment can be challenged using Hegelian dialectics. In doing so, he is influenced by Marx and Engels’s critique of Hegel and their adoption of Hegel’s dialectical method. Friedrich Engels distinguishes between ‘the whole dogmatic content of the Hegelian *system* [which] is declared to be absolute truth, in contradiction to his dialectical *method*, which dissolves all dogmatism’.[24] This distinction between Hegel’s system, which is rejected, and his dialectical method, which is adopted, is a left-Hegelian move that is followed in part by Adorno. On the one hand, Adorno perceives Hegel as a conservative thinker who provides an ‘apology for the *status quo*’[25] and a defence of

[21] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 21.
[22] See Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, pp. 120-167; Theodor W. Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture* (London: Routledge, 1991).
[23] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. xv.
[24] Friedrich Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy1888*, (C. P. Dutt (ed.), New York: International Publishers, 1970 (1941)), p. 13, cited in Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1978), p. 57, emphasis in original.
[25] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 19.

the State; on the other, he perceives Hegel as a revolutionary *par excellence*, whose dialectical method provides a means of challenging the *status quo*.

Adorno points to Hegel's critique of Kant's dualisms as revealing the radical nature of his dialectics:

> The poles that Kant opposed to one another—form and content, nature and spirit, theory and praxis, freedom and necessity, the thing in itself and the phenomenon—are all permeated through and through by reflection in such a way that none of these determinations are left standing as ultimate. In order to be thought, and to exist, each inherently requires the other that Kant opposed to it.[26]

Instead of posing opposites that must be thought separately, Hegel sees the reflection of one extreme in the other, arguing that it is impossible to think one concept without also thinking its opposite. He posits the category of mediation between the two concepts, examining the ways in which they constitute one another, without proposing a weak middle way. For Adorno, this is the radical aspect of Hegel's thought, setting his philosophy apart from traditional metaphysics, with its insistence on an 'ultimate principle from which everything must be derivable'[27] and from new philosophy or ontology, with its melancholy resignation.[28] He finds in Hegel's thought an alternative to Kantian dualism, and its reductionist legacy in modern liberalism, and to poststructural thought, with its overemphasis on the previously neglected side of a binary pair. Instead, he emphasises the importance of mediation (*Vermittlung*), which is an interpretive category that never settles on a middle ground between two poles, but operates 'in and through

[26] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', in *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), p. 8.
[27] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy' p. 9.
[28] Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 68.

the extremes'.[29] For Adorno, 'the content of Hegel's philosophy is the notion that truth—which in Hegel means the system—cannot be expressed as a fundamental principle…but is the dynamic totality of all the propositions that can be generated from each other by virtue of their contradictions'.[30] So where poststructural thought focuses on the categories of fragmentation, particularity, and alterity, and largely ignores notions of totality, universality, and collective solidarity, Adorno attends to the relations between the two sets of concepts. He maintains that concrete particulars are shaped by wider social processes, and that attention to these particulars enhances our understanding of those processes.

Adorno draws on Hegel's dialectics to attack the notion of a complete separation of subject and object. He maintains that such separation is false and masks the repression of the object by the subject. The repression to which Adorno refers is not merely of the human 'other', though this is of central importance; it also refers to human domination of the natural world. However, like other left-Hegelian interpretations of Hegel, Adorno firmly rejects Hegel's identity theory, which posits the underlying unity of subject and object, thought and being, and leads to the belief that contradictory ideas and ways of life are part of a total truth.[31] He maintains that identity theories lead to reification and a suppression of difference. His oft-quoted remark that 'all objectification is a forgetting'[32] indicates a longing for a space where difference and non-identity might flourish.[33] Furthermore, he argues that a concept of total truth denies the possibility of reflection

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[29] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 9.
[30] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 12.
[31] Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jeremy J. Shapiro, 'Introduction' in Theodor W. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1993), pp. xiv-xv.
[32]Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 230.
[33] Martin Jay, *Adorno*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 68.

and leads to a withdrawal from human effort. Instead, he proposes a conception of subject and object, thought and being, whereby they cannot be thought without reference to each other and are therefore neither completely separate nor in complete unity.[34] He stresses the ways in which the concepts mediate one another, showing how thought is shaped by societal discourses and institutions, and society is shaped by thought and practice.

Although Adorno is strongly influenced by a Marxist interpretation of Hegel, he does not uncritically accept a left-Hegelian reading; indeed, in many ways the critical theory of the early Frankfurt School can been seen as a return to Hegel from Marx.[35] Unlike most Marxists, Adorno posits his method of immanent critique against Hegel's 'fundamental antinomies'. He argues that whilst the Hegelian system silences thought through the reification of philosophical categories, its power can be appropriated in order to criticise itself, by holding the system up against the categories it sets forth.[36] Thus, Adorno stays true to Hegel's philosophy, resisting his concluding moves and finding truth amidst the untruth: 'Hegelian dialectic finds its ultimate truth, that of its own impossibility, in its unresolved and vulnerable quality, even if, as the theodicy of self-consciousness, it has no awareness of this'.[37] Adorno's appropriation of Hegel is therefore not only in the separation of his method from his system; Hegel's speculative philosophy and continual critical self-reflection provided substantive inspiration for the

[34] Jay, *Adorno*, pp. 61-64.
[35] Nicholsen and Shapiro, 'Introduction', p. xxi.
[36] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 57. See Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 334-338, for a section entitled 'Dialectics Cut Short by Hegel' where he criticizes Hegel for subsuming the particular to the universal and thus cutting short dialectics. See also Gillian Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology* (London: The Athlone Press, 1981), for a critique of this reading of Hegel.
[37] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p.13.

development of his negative dialectics, his focus on sociohistorical particulars, and his ideas on utopian hope.

Adorno finds in Hegel a focus on the negative that informs his critique of modern society.[38] He maintains that the relentlessly positive, prescriptive, and instrumental forms of knowledge associated with the Enlightenment drive out all alternatives to the *status quo*, and that one of the tasks of a critical theory is to preserve those alternatives, ideas, and ways of being that cannot be neatly subsumed into socially sanctioned categories. Through a process of commodification and reification, the Enlightenment has stripped language of the possibility of thinking outside accepted social parameters, promoting what Marcuse famously termed 'one-dimensional' society. Language is unable to give voice to pain and suffering or to express critical alternatives; instead, 'all difference degenerates to a nuance in the monotony of supply'.[39] Adorno's negative dialectic, in contrast, is a 'dialectic of resistance'[40] that determinedly preserves the non-identical: that which cannot be understood, manipulated, or controlled by reason. He draws on Hegel's negative reason,[41] which dismantles Kant's rigid dualisms without reifying them, preserving a sense of mobility and process rather than a fixed notion of being.

Hegel has been accused of being abstract, particularly in contrast to the phenomenological, anthropological, and ontological schools of thought. However, Adorno maintains that this is far from the case, saying: 'he brought infinitely more concreteness into his philosophical ideas than

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[38] Adorno maintains that 'Hegel's philosophy is indeed negative: critique' (Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 30).
[39] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 21.
[40] Nicholsen and Shapiro, Introduction, p. xii.
[41] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 8.

those approaches'.[42] His work is marked by sensitivity to reality and sociohistorical specificities. Hegel located truth not in abstract ideas, as in traditional metaphysics, asserting that 'truth is not a minted coin that can be given and pocketed ready-made',[43] but in process and in the specificities considered beneath philosophical consideration.[44] Adorno, too, sought to juxtapose sociohistorical particulars against the universal, believing that abstract universals suppressed contradictory realities.

Despite eschewing Hegel's identity theory, his belief that contradictory ideas and ways of life were all part of a total truth, Adorno argues that even this aspect of his thought contains a 'moment of truth'.[45] He argues that Hegel's belief in eventual reconciliation and his doctrine of absolute spirit can be interpreted as a further negative move, a preservation of non-identity in the face of identity, of something non-immanent in the face of relentless positivity. A key tenet of Enlightenment thinking is its rejection of that beyond what we can see or control; it was perceived as a coming of age, whereby society no longer needed to look to priests or rulers for guidance, but could rely instead on our individual reason and judgement. Adorno finds in Hegel's idealism a preservation of utopia, and inspiration for his own utopian belief that 'success might be achieved anyway', despite evidence to the contrary:

> The rigor of Hegel's attempt to rescue the ontological proof of God in opposition to Kant may be questioned. But what impelled him to do it was not a desire to eclipse reason but on the contrary the utopian hope that the block, the 'limits of the possibility of experience', might not be final; that success might be achieved anyway, as in the

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[42] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 67.
[43] Georg W. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 22.
[44] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', pp. 35-40.
[45] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 40.

> concluding scene of *Faust*: that spirit, in all its weakness, limitations, and negativity, resembles truth and is therefore suited for knowledge of truth.[46]

Thus for Adorno, Hegel's idealism, his belief in the absolute, is not unreasonable but rather a preservation of reason in the face of manipulative, fragmented rationality. Adorno also finds in Hegel's idealism a 'wholesome corrective' to the philosophy of being propounded by Heidegger and his followers:

> If at one time the arrogance of the Hegelian doctrine of absolute spirit was rightly emphasized, today, when idealism is defamed by everyone and most of all by the secret idealists,[47] a wholesome corrective becomes apparent in the notion of spirit's absoluteness.[48]

Adorno finds this 'new philosophy' profoundly unsatisfactory with regards moral or substantive issues, accusing its proponents of secret idealism and 'pathos-filled narcissism'.[49] For Adorno, the abandonment of enlightenment ideals hinders social critique; there can be no immanent critique if there are no socially accepted values against which to measure society, and there can be no transcendent critique if there is no utopian ideal of reconciliation to strive for. Hegel's doctrine of absolute spirit provides one such utopian ideal.

Adorno provides an approach to critique which differs markedly from both Habermasian and poststructural approaches. His dialectics insists on attending to both sides of binary oppositions, moving back and forth in continual interplay between 'the knowledge of society of totality' and

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[46] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 41.
[47] By 'secret idealists', Adorno is referring to those philosophers, such as Heidegger, who are concerned with questions of ontology.
[48] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', pp. 41-42.
[49] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', pp. 35-47; Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p.52.

‘the specific content of the object’.[50] Thus, where both Habermasian and poststructural theory are one-sided in their analyses, privileging universalism and consensus (Habermasian) or particularity and dissensus (poststructuralism), Adorno attends to the ways in which these opposites constitute one another and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of social reality.

Adorno and Suffering

The first part of this chapter has focused on Adorno’s critique of the ways in which Enlightenment ideals are pursued under modernity, tracing the influences of Marx and Hegel on the development of this critique. In the remainder of the chapter, I focus more specifically on Adorno’s response to suffering, drawing particularly on his reflections in the wake of the Holocaust. Can we still pursue emancipation in the face of such inhumanity? Adorno argues that we must. How should we do this? In ‘Cultural Criticism and Society’, he argues that emancipation requires both immanent and transcendent critique of enlightenment: ‘To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel’s polemic against Kant…Dialectics means intransigence towards all reification’.[51] Adorno’s first response, then, is one of immanent critique, or the enlightening of Enlightenment. His negative dialectics point to the bleak, dark side of modernity, drawing attention to that which is neglected in contemporary ethical thought—the concrete suffering of particular individuals—

[50] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 33.
[51] Adorno, *Prisms*, 31.

and determinedly preserving alternatives to the *status quo*. Alongside an immanent critique of modernity lies a utopian strand that points to something transcendent: the notion of promise and the possibility that things might yet get better. I examine these two facets of Adorno's thought in turn—immanent critique and utopian hope—and argue that he offers a stark alternative to liberal cosmopolitan and Habermasian approaches to suffering and violence in world politics. His approach resists the pitfalls of liberal thought without denying Enlightenment ideals: where liberals propose abstract and universal solutions to modern ills, he refuses to make positive suggestions for change; where liberal approaches assume a strong version of moral progress, he is acutely aware of its fragility and reversibility; where liberals neglect historical and social antecedents of suffering, he insists that the atrocities of history must be given voice and worked through; and where liberals neglect individuals' inner lives, he draws attention to particular suffering and the importance of critical self-reflection.

Negative Dialectics

Measuring the Enlightenment against its own standards—the method of immanent critique—is the first layer of Adorno's response to modernity. As we have seen, Adorno maintains that Enlightenment notions of justice and injustice fail to live up to their goal of improving individual well-being. Furthermore, the appearance of progress towards Enlightenment ideals hinders critique: 'the semblance of freedom makes reflection upon one's own unfreedom incomparably more difficult than formerly'.[52] Adorno argues that the mind has 'fallen increasingly under the

[52] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 21.

anonymous sway of the *status quo*',[53] as an obsession with universality has taken hold in both social theory and practice—a rational, abstract, generalised universality that neglects concrete, sensuous particulars.[54] Adorno's negative dialectics are an attempt on his part to preserve the non-identical—that which cannot be subsumed under universal concepts and which does not conform to closely held liberal assumptions about progress and rationality.

Modern thought points to progress as one of the indisputable cornerstones and justifications for its ideology, with the proliferation of human rights discourse seen as evidence of such progress. However, Adorno takes issue with a narrative of progress on two counts. At the most basic level, he argues that history does not provide convincing evidence for progressive philosophies of history; the calculated attempt to annihilate the Jewish race took place under modernity, and indeed, was facilitated by its rationalisation.[55] More crucially, however, a progressive philosophy encourages us to discount individual suffering by viewing society through a lens that looks for progress:

> The philosophy of history repeats a process which occurred in Christianity: the goodness which in reality remains at the mercy of suffering is concealed as the force which determines the course of history and ultimately triumphs...[56]

An emphasis on progress encourages us to look for confirmation of moral progress in sweeping historical trends, discounting evidence to the contrary.

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[53] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 21.
[54] Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 18.
[55] In 'Education After Auschwitz', Adorno argues that '[t]he pressure exerted by the prevailing universal upon everything particular, upon the individual people and the individual institutions, has a tendency to destroy the particular and the individual together with their power of resistance'. Theodor W. Adorno, 'Education After Auschwitz' in Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Colombia University Press, 2005), p. 193.
[56] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 224.

Against liberal notions of progress, then, Adorno draws our attention to the pervasiveness of suffering under modernity. He argues that the concrete reality of human suffering must be given voice: 'The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth'[57] and '[p]erennial suffering has as much right to expression as a tortured man has to scream'.[58] The concrete other, glossed over by the abstraction of liberal social-contract theory, is often the individual experiencing the negative aspects of progress and is precisely the one who suffers in silence. The articulation of particular pain challenges the abstractions of liberal social-contract theory, which neglect the bodily and psychological dimensions of human experience. Adorno maintains that bodily pain 'tells our knowledge that suffering ought not to be, that things should be different'.[59] It is at this intersection, where physical reality challenges closely held beliefs about the way the world is and should be, that the material world meets with the philosophical world and prompts criticism and social change.

Part of Adorno's emphasis on particular suffering as a corrective to abstract universals is his insistence that historical experiences of extreme suffering must not be glossed over or forgotten. There must be fora for telling the truth about the past, for enlightening those who do not know or who do not want to know about the horrors that have taken place under modernity: 'Enlightenment about what happened in the past must work, above all, against a forgetfulness

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[57] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 17-18.
[58] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 362.
[59] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 203.

that too easily goes along with and justifies what is forgotten'.[60] This truth-telling is crucial if humanity is to learn about itself, and what it is capable of, and to seek to do things differently.[61] Adorno argues that negative dialectics can bring 'a healing awareness' as society perceives the 'marks of unreason in its own reason'.[62]

Adorno's experience of living through the period of the Holocaust, albeit in exile, prompted agonised reflections on the unspeakable horrors and death suffered by millions deemed 'other' by Nazi Germany and on what they meant both for Germany as a nation and also for humankind in general. He famously stated that '[t]o write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric',[63] arguing that poetry cannot help but be co-opted by the dominant social forces which shut down and commodify alternative voices—those same social forces that allowed Auschwitz to take place. Adorno uses the place name 'Auschwitz' to refer to the Nazi genocide because it emphasises the concreteness and historicity of the events.[64] He abhorred the detachment with which the atrocities were discussed just a decade after the fact:

> All of us today also recognize a readiness to deny or belittle what happened—however difficult it is to conceive that people are not ashamed to argue that it was surely at most

[60] Theodor W. Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', trans. Timothy Bahti and Geoffrey Hartman, in Geoffrey Hartman (ed.), *Bitburg: In Moral and Political Perspective* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), p. 125.
[61] Although Adorno does not hold out great hope that this learning will take place, he maintains that we cannot give up reaching for a world in which Auschwitz does not happen again. See Adorno, 'Education After Auschwitz', pp. 191-204.
[62] Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 74.
[63] Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 34. Note that with this phrase, Adorno has powerfully shaped Holocaust discourse. His pronouncement has been transformed into the sound-bite 'after Auschwitz', putting Auschwitz at the centre of public and academic debate. For reflections on the significance of this statement, put in the context of Adorno's wider thought, see Michael Rothberg, 'After Adorno: Culture in the Wake of Catastrophe', *New German Critique*, No. 72 (1997), pp. 45-81.
[64] Auschwitz was the site for the extermination of an estimated 1.6 million people between 1940 and 1944, 90 per cent of whom were Jewish.

> only five million Jews, and not six million, who were killed. Irrational too is the widespread 'settling of accounts' about guilt, as if Dresden made up for Auschwitz. There is already something inhuman in making such calculations, or in the haste to dispense with self-reflection through counter-accusations.[65]

Against such rationalisation and denial, he pushes for remembrance and reflection, arguing that what is repressed or unconscious will do much more damage than that which is made conscious. He argues that effective remembrance is extraordinarily difficult; it does not begin and end with reproach, but requires one to '[endure] the horror through a certain strength that comprehends even the incomprehensible'.[66]

As well as drawing our attention to the particular horrors of past suffering, Adorno maintains that we have a responsibility to reflect upon how they came about. In an essay on coming to terms with the past, Adorno asks what objective social conditions might have brought about the turn to National Socialism in Germany.[67] He explores several conditions that might have facilitated the rise of fascism. He argues that economic insecurity, combined with a need to conform to the

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[65] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', p. 116. See also Saul Friedlander, 'Trauma and Transference' in Saul Friedlander, *Memory, History, and the Extermination of the Jews in Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), pp. 123-130. Friedlander discusses the defence mechanisms (repression, denial, splitting off) employed by Jews and Germans who lived through the period of the Holocaust and the profound silence of the majority of Jewish and German intellectuals in the decades that followed (Adorno and Hannah Arendt being exceptions to this rule in their refusal to push the Shoah to one side).

[66] 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', p. 127.

[67] In doing so, Adorno sees the Nazi genocide as revelatory in some sense, and deserving of engagement, not because it signals an absolute break in history, but precisely because it does not: because it sheds light on the social and cultural context in which the events took place. Jay M. Bernstein argues that for Adorno, 'the destruction of the conditions of metaphysical meaningfulness, how lives have point and worth, that occurred in the camps is the hyperbole, the exaggerated fulfilment of the instrumental rationality that forms the infrastructure of modern societal rationalization and rationalized reason. Recognition of that calls for, demands a reorientation in our thinking'. (Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 384). In this sense, there are similarities between Adorno's reflections on the Holocaust and the writings of Zygmunt Bauman, who also saw clear links between modern instrumental rationality and the devastating efficiency of the Nazi machine. See Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001).

status quo to preserve what little security they had, served to prevent citizens from becoming autonomous, politically mature agents who sought to hold their leaders accountable. This insecurity, combined with the all-encompassing culture industry, meant that autonomous thought required 'painful intellectual effort', which was close to impossible under the circumstances. In his words:

> The necessity of such adaption [to the given circumstances], to the point of identifying with the *status quo*, with the given, with power as such, creates the potential for totalitarianism, and is reinforced by the dissatisfaction and rage which that forced adaption itself produces and reproduces. Because reality doesn't provide the autonomy or, finally, the possible happiness that the concept of democracy actually promises, people are indifferent to democracy, where they don't secretly hate it.[68]

Although democracy promised freedom and happiness in the place of unfreedom, this was proved untrue. Once again, Enlightenment ideals did not match concrete reality, provoking a dissonance and anger that paved the road for fascism, which promised security, integration, and collective greatness in the place of insecurity, disintegration, and humiliation.

For Adorno, the enlightening of Enlightenment is a negative exercise. He does not prescribe positive prescriptions for change, for fear that this will further hinder people's ability to act as autonomous agents and to make judgements based on the conditions they face in a particular time and space:

> Men must act in order to change the present petrified conditions of existence, but the latter have left their mark so deeply on people, have deprived them of so much of their life and individuation, that they scarcely seem capable of the spontaneity necessary to

[68] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', pp. 124-125.

> do so…Concrete and positive suggestions for change merely strengthen this hindrance.[69]

Adorno's negativity—where the maxim 'men must act' is held alongside a rejection of 'concrete and positive suggestions for change'—is the antithesis of the kind of tidy moral theory that helps us to feel better that is the substance of much international thought. In shunning a positive moral theory, Adorno was in accord with Benjamin, who had a profound distrust of progressive historicism and famously maintained that 'there is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism'.[70] In part, the reluctance to flesh out critical theory's utopian impulses stemmed from the Jewish heritage of many of the Frankfurt School, with its prohibition on describing God.[71]

Although Adorno refuses to seek 'solutions' for the ills of modernity,[72] he gestures towards a different kind of being that might ameliorate its worst excesses. In 'What does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' he points to political education as centrally important, arguing that although those who are likely to be receptive to such instruction are not those who are likely to be attracted to fascism in the first place, 'it is in no way superfluous to strengthen, through enlightened instruction, even this group against "non-public" opinion'.[73] He hopes that in doing so, 'cadres' of self-reflective, critical intellectuals may develop who will then go on to have broader societal influence. Part of the political education that Adorno advocates is critical self-

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[69] Theodor W. Adorno, 'Society', in S. E. Bronner and D. M. Kellner (eds.), *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 275.
[70] Walter Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zorn (London: Pimlico, 1955/1999), p. 248.
[71] Jay, *The Dialectical Imagination*, p. 56.
[72] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' p. 127.
[73] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' p. 126.

reflection that enlightens the public about the past and its antecedents. He suggests that we need a deeper understanding and acceptance of the principles of psychoanalysis and that although 'mass analysis' is unlikely to take place, 'rigorous psychoanalysis' should be firmly embedded in the institutions of intellectual circles. At the very least, he argues, this would encourage intellectuals to avoid apportioning blame to others but instead turn their gaze on themselves and their own (often frustrated) reaction to societal conditions. In his words, 'coming to terms with the past in the sense of aiming for enlightenment is essentially that sort of *turn towards the subject*: reinforcement of a person's self-consciousness and, with that, a sense of self'.[74] Alongside critical self-reflection and enlightenment, though, should be a pragmatic appeal to self-interest: reminding the public of the disastrous consequences of war, of the horrific consequences not just for those deemed 'other' whose lives were targeted to be eliminated, but also (albeit to a lesser extent) for those ordinary citizens whose lives were irrevocably damaged.[75]

Promise

Negative dialectics—the enlightening of Enlightenment—is the minimal necessary response to the ills of modernity, and it is this which receives most attention from scholars reading Adorno. However, as we have seen, Adorno's thought is not wholly negative. Shierry Weber and Jeremy Shapiro argue that his negative dialectics are 'an essential vehicle' for the individual trying to

[74] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' p. 128.
[75] Note that this appeal to self-interest shows a political awareness that many commentators are reluctant to ascribe to Adorno, who they consider apolitical and irrelevant. However, in 'What does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', Adorno evinces an awareness of motivation that is generally lacking in mainstream (liberal) political theory texts, though present in classical realism.

live an authentic life under modernity—they preserve the truth about society, looking beyond 'the slick façade of everyday life',[76] as well as the truth about oneself. However, this negation is only a part of Adorno's response. Alongside his often bleak reflections on modernity lies a thread of hope that gestures to something beyond the rational and immediate:

> …while the expression of this negation is a part of the truth, it is only a partially developed form of it. For the real truth about reality includes awareness of the potentiality, the desire, and the justification for transcending the perverted world. It must go beyond the merely dialectical to what Hegel calls the speculative, in which the antagonism of the dialectic are resolved.[77]

The second strand of Adorno's response to modernity is his writings on utopia and promise—the transcendent critique to which he referred in his essay on cultural criticism and society. It is to a consideration of this second response that I now turn.

Adorno's metaphysics are an important counterbalance to his negative dialectics and fall 'outside ethics'. His notion of promise is non-immanent and thus at odds with the immanency Geuss identified as the second pillar of contemporary ethics. It points to something beyond that which can be seen, measured, and predicted and sits in stark contrast to the instrumental rationality of modern liberal ethics. Part of what Adorno objects to in modern thought is precisely the marginalisation of metaphysics; he finds an answer to Kant's refusal to look beyond the finite in Hegel's reaching for the infinite. Adorno's notion of promise also differs markedly from a Habermasian idea of progress. It is not something that can be known or achieved; where Habermas pursues an already existing consensus through rational argument, Adorno clings to the

[76] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?' p. 125.
[77] Nicholsen and Shapiro, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

notion of an unknowable, indefinable utopia. The idea of a utopia is a negative move, preserving hope in the face of bleakness: 'The ray of light that reveals the whole to be untrue in all its moments is none other than utopia, the utopia of the whole truth, which is still to be realized'.[78] We cannot let go of the Hegelian hope that 'we might yet succeed'.[79] The notion that the 'whole truth' might one day be known inspires continued social criticism and praxis. This hope softens the darkness of extreme suffering; it tells us that we should not give up trying to come to terms with what has happened to us or what we have inflicted on others. Without this hope before us, we might give ourselves to despair, abandoning the struggle that is so central to Adorno's reading of Hegel.[80]

A reading of 'Meditations on Metaphysics' gives the most concentrated insight into the place of metaphysics in Adorno's thought.[81] He eschews the possibility of traditional metaphysics after Auschwitz, saying 'Our metaphysical faculty is paralysed because actual events have shattered the basis on which speculative metaphysical thought could be reconciled with experience'.[82] The material world has collided with the metaphysical, yet it has not completely annihilated it. The notion of promise, of hope remains. In answer to the question 'What is a metaphysical experience?' Adorno points to particularity, to 'fugitive ethical events'[83] that creep into everyday life. He illustrates his metaphysics with reference to the childhood experience of happiness:

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[78] Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 88.
[79] Adorno, 'The Experiential Content of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 68.
[80] Nicholsen and Shapiro, 'Introduction', pp. xxiv-xxv.
[81] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 361-408.
[82] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 362.
[83] Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, pp. 419-420.

> [W]e are most likely to visualize it, as Proust did, in the happiness, for instance, that is promised by village names like Applebachsville, Windgap, or Lords Valley. One thinks that going there would bring fulfilment, as if there were such a thing. Being really there makes the promise recede like a rainbow. And yet one is not disappointed; the feeling now is one of being too close, rather, and not seeing it for that reason…[84]

This promise of happiness is a 'metaphysics of the *particular*';[85] it gestures to the possibility of transformation in a world in which despair rather than hope sounds loudest. A child's naïve sense of wonder and magic in imaginative play invokes the metaphysical: a sense of the non-identical, whereby the particular is not perceived as fungible, or able to be substituted for another, but as a thing of value in itself.[86]

For Adorno, great art also points to the metaphysical. Under the culture industry, art has succumbed to commodification and the god of profit has come before criticism and truth. However, this was not always the case:

> Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to human beings; but it always simultaneously raised a protest against the petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honoring them. Insofar as culture becomes wholly assimilated to and integrated in those petrified relations, human beings are once more debased.[87]

The role of culture is to 'raise a protest' against the commodification of human beings. The arts can help to express pain where words fail; they resist universality and instrumentalism and point to the possibility of transformation. They can help those who have undergone extreme suffering

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[84] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 373.
[85] Daniel K. L. Chua, 'Adorno's Metaphysics of Mourning: Beethoven's Farewell to Adorno', *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 87, No. 3 (2005), pp. 523-545.
[86] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp. 227-228.
[87] Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Culture Industry Reconsidered', in in S. E. Bronner and D. M. Kellner (eds.), *Critical Theory and Society: A Reader* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 129.

to begin the process of living with and through their pain.[88] The arts also preserve hope in the face of despair. They point to something beyond the now; they say to us that ‘everything is not just nothing’.[89] For Adorno, great artists like Beethoven gesture to what lies beyond the suffering and contradictions of modernity. He maintains that ‘great works of art express hope more powerfully than the traditional theological texts’.[90] In pointing to art and culture as part of a response to suffering, Adorno opens himself up to accusations of esoteric elitism and a poverty of politics, but evinces a much more *human* understanding of what it is to suffer.

Conclusion

Adorno’s work addresses the limitations of the Enlightenment thinking that underpins modern international ethical thought. Enlightenment thinking encourages a way of viewing the world whereby objects and entities fall into general categories and are able to be substituted for one another. Identity thinking and an emphasis on rationality encourage a discounting of individual human beings in a way that strips them of their humanity in any real sense. Rawlsian social contract theory and its inheritors abstract from particularity, silencing the ‘concrete other’ in the search for generally advantageous social arrangements and placing justice at the centre of liberal thought. Adorno’s voice is an important counterbalance to the hyper-rational, problem-solving approach that holds sway in ethical thought. Suffering does not prompt him to moral theory,

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[88] To illustrate, Richard Mollica points to the central role of art, beauty and culture in assisting the healing of those traumatised by unimaginable atrocities. See Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 32-33, 105-109.
[89] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 404.
[90] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 397.

where prescriptions abound. On the contrary, he believes that every time one tries to rationalise the bodily impulse, the urgency that propels one to action is lost.[91] Adorno holds in balance the maxim that 'men must act', prompted by suffering, with the warning that this action must not be an instrumental, prescribed response.

Adorno's approach to suffering also offers an important corrective to Habermasian discourse ethics. In denying the existence of an already existing path to Enlightenment that can be uncovered through rational discussion, Adorno's response to suffering evinces a greater awareness of the aftermath of trauma and its assault on the ability to assimilate the experience into communicable categories. Where individuals and communities have suffered greatly, the notion that they might be able to engage in dialogue with the hope of reaching a mutually-acceptable consensus based on the force of the better argument is both insensitive and likely to be counterproductive. Those who have suffered most are least likely to be able to participate in rational debate; their suffering needs to be given voice, but voice of a different kind. Adorno is sensitive to the bodily and psychological dimensions of suffering and argues that these should be communicated in all their horror to challenge accepted social categories, not domesticated for general palatability and instrumental ends.

Although Adorno focuses on concrete particularity and the details of everyday life as a counter to general social analysis, he also considers the ways in which larger social forces, structures, and institutions mediate concrete experience, and how attention to particularity sheds light on

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[91] Giuseppe Tassone, 'Amoral Adorno: Negative Dialectics Outside Ethics', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (2005), pp. 251-267.

those broader processes. Thus, although his work anticipates poststructural thought in its social critique and emphasis on particularity, it differs significantly in its refusal to reject universal categories and in its insistence on a dynamic dialectical analysis that mediates between the two. Thus, Adorno is able to analyse the twin forces of fragmentation and totalisation in contemporary society, while poststructural theory, with its rejection of dialectics and macro-theory, is less well equipped for analysis of homogenous repressive trends or collective historical struggle.

Adorno's refusal to prescribe solutions to the failings of modernity makes his writings unpalatable to many. However, an Adornian approach is neither wholly negative nor wholly pessimistic. He calls for the active preservation of alternatives to the *status quo* and gestures toward ways in which we might preserve pockets of self-reflection and social critique in the modern world. Above all, however, he proposes a different way of being in the world, one that perceives the world as it is, fully aware of the contradictions and oppression that permeate existence, but that also sees beyond these failings to what could be, remaining alive to the possibility of beauty and kindness. In Nicholsen and Shapiro's words, this approach

> discerns and experiences the good, the true, and the beautiful through their deformations—as the negation of the latter, and as real in this negation. It pursues freedom and happiness in a repressive and oppressive society without ideologically denying this repression and oppression. It pursues the life of a critical intellect without suffering the deformation and rigidification that is the normal form of intellectual life in critical society.[92]

[92] Nicholsen and Shapiro, 'Introduction', p. xvii.

By determinedly perceiving the potential for the good and beautiful in the deformed, Adorno proposes a way of being that refuses to fall into flat despair or cynicism, preserving a critique that remains hopeful and mobile, whilst not denying the overwhelming bleakness of experience.

Adorno's notion of promise remains vague and ill-defined: he sees glimpses of hope, but is reluctant to flesh these out, leaving his writings as 'a message in a bottle for future generations'.[93] To get a better idea of what Adorno's ideas can offer international political thought, we do indeed need to turn to the generations to whom he bequeathed them. In the next chapter, I discuss the writings of Gillian Rose, a social theorist who was profoundly influenced by Adorno's thought and found in his work a focus on suffering and a refusal to shy away from the 'disasters of modernity' that informed her own. She moves from Adorno's negative response to suffering towards a more constructive, politically engaged response of mourning and political risk.

[93] This quote appears to be anecdotal.

CHAPTER FOUR

GILLIAN ROSE: FROM DIALECTICAL TO SPECULATIVE THOUGHT

In the previous chapter, I drew on Adorno's work to extend and deepen my critique of liberal approaches to international ethics, and to point to a different way of thinking about suffering. Adorno argues that we need to enlighten Enlightenment by highlighting the mismatch between ideals and reality, and advocates a negative dialectics that meets the universal with the particular, the abstract with the concrete, and narratives of progress with narratives of suffering. In this way, his thought disturbs the accepted universalist, instrumental, rational approach to global suffering. Alongside this negation, Adorno gestures to a fragile promise of something to come; however, his notion of promise is ephemeral and fragmented. It is helpful to turn to those to whom he bequeathed his thought in order better to elaborate the implications for global politics.

In this chapter, I examine the writings of Gillian Rose: an inheritor of Adorno's thought who combines the humanity and multiplicity of early critical theory with a concern for acting politically. She offers a different way of being in the world that mourns pervasive human suffering whilst also emphasising the need to negotiate the break between law and ethics and to take the risk of political engagement. Like Adorno, Rose is acutely aware of the trauma

pervasive in modern life and draws on psychoanalysis in her social and political theorising. Her approach to ethical thought has a consideration of pain and the struggle to respond at its heart. However, she is critical of Adorno's dialectical method, which she considers 'dour, judgemental and work-shy'[1] and drawn to the speculative thinking of Hegel and Kierkegaard. She uses their thought to elaborate her response to the brokenness of modernity: a response that calls for mourning and political risk. Furthermore, where much of Adorno's work is formulated in response to Enlightenment thought, Rose's thought is primarily situated in response to postmodern thought, taking the critique of modern ethics as given. As such, where the previous chapter deepens the critique of liberal responses to violence and suffering, this chapter deepens the critique of the critical (and especially poststructural) turn in international political thought.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section situates Rose's work in relation to the Frankfurt School, and in particular to the thought of Adorno, which was the subject of her doctoral thesis. The second section traces her move from dialectical thinking to speculative thinking, influenced by her readings of Hegel, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard. The third examines her response to the 'disasters of modernity'[2]—a response that works through suffering and stakes itself politically, taking the risk of action alongside mourning.

[1] Caygill, 'The Broken Hegel', p. 25.
[2] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 76.

Rose and the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory

Rose is best known for her philosophical memoir, *Love's Work*, which points to her struggles with life and love, a life that ended before its time in 1995 after a battle with ovarian cancer. The epigraph to her book, which she wrote in the last months of her life, is 'Keep your mind in hell, and despair not'.[3] *Love's Work* was not merely the title of her memoir, but her life's work: '…*love's work*, the work I have been charting, accomplishing, but, above all and necessarily, failing in, all along the way'.[4] Rose began reading philosophy at the age of seventeen, and found in Plato's *Republic* and Pascal's *Pensées* a way of thinking to which she was inexorably attracted:

> Perplexed, aporetic, not dogmatic, they indicated the difficulty of the way, and the routes to be essayed. I never discovered in them any *euporia*, any easy way or solution, any monologic, imperialist metaphysics. Philosophy intimated the wager of wisdom— as collective endeavour and solitary predicament. It redeemed the earnest stupidity of my schooling.[5]

The 'earnest stupidity' of her schooling was soon replaced by the even 'deeper stupidity' of reading philosophy at Oxford as an undergraduate. Rose found her education at St Hilda's College dull and irrelevant, lacking in engagement with interesting societal and ethical questions. Fortunately, in her third year she encountered Jean Floud, who pointed her to sociological theory

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[3] Attributed to Staretz Silouan 1866-1938.
[4] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 71.
[5] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 120.

and facilitated her rediscovery of an open, speculative, and critical consideration of society and ideas.[6]

Rose's ventures into the world of social theory led her to the Frankfurt School of critical theory. Her engagement with their works profoundly influenced the development of her own thought. Rose's doctoral studies and first book focused on Adorno, with a sophisticated analysis of his thought that was far more than the introduction indicated by its title: *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*.[7] She was attracted to Adorno's writings in part because of his insistent interdisciplinarity and his rejection both of liberal thinking and of the 'new philosophy' of such thinkers as Heidegger and Husserl.[8] Like Adorno, she found poststructural thought uninspiring and unconvincing, and unable to engage with the substantive concerns of traditional philosophy. Indeed, her later works are in large part devoted to a critique of poststructural approaches to law and ethics.[9] Despite finding much of value in Adorno's work, however, his work left her unsatisfied on a number of counts. She argues that his obsession with method leads to proceduralism, that his thought is insufficiently grounded in social and historical context, and that he loses sight of the political.

Rose maintains that although Adorno is generally characterised as a Hegelian Marxist, he is better understood as a neo-Kantian Marxist: he falls into neo-Kantian dualisms and

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[6] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 122.
[7] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*.
[8] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 52. According to Rose, Adorno believed 'the new philosophy did not raise substantive and moral issues as profoundly as the classical tradition had done, and this was partly because of the development of individual social sciences which had taken over some of the traditional concerns of philosophy'.
[9] See, for example, Gillian Rose, *Dialectic of Nihilism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984); Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*; Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

methodologism despite his critique of Kant.[10] Rose is unconvinced by Adorno's immanent critique, noting that 'even at its most "immanent", this form of critique succeeds at the expense of transforming all philosophy into epistemology, even when such philosophy consists of a radical attempt to renounce epistemology'.[11] Adorno's obsession with method and style stems from his theory of society and his desire to negate dominant concepts, but leads him to methodologism all the same.[12]

Rose welcomes Adorno's broadening of Marxist thought beyond the economic to the cultural, but maintains that he pays too little attention to its historical and practical aspects. She argues that he does not delineate an historical account of capitalism – that he 'rejects all forms of historicism'[13] – and that his writings lack an adequate account of the state.[14] His emphasis on the individual at the expense of the underlying socio-political context is limited and short-sighted:

> ...Adorno's emphasis on the formation or deformation of the individual did replace any further definition of the macro-factor, the form of domination. He might at least have detailed the mechanisms by which power has become diffuse but omnipotent, and how that is related to change in the organisation of production. Ideology, domination, and reification are simply equated with each other, and the individual is not satisfactorily reinserted into the socio-political context.[15]

According to Rose, Adorno forfeits the benefits of adopting a Marxian approach, an approach that might have allowed him to situate individuals in their particular societal and political milieu

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[10] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, pp. 27-33.
[11] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 76.
[12] See Rose's chapter on Adorno's ideas on method and concern with style in Chapter Two 'The Search for Style' in *The Melancholy Science*, pp. 11-26. His fragmentary style is perhaps best represented in his book *Minima Moralia*.
[13] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 37.
[14] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 4.
[15] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 95.

through an analysis of the means of production and social relations. Instead, she argues, he makes it impossible to do so, failing even to locate a social subject.[16]

Related to this failure to locate individuals socially and politically, Rose argues, Adorno fails to make room for praxis.[17] Despite his call for 'interventions', he does not put forward any political goals. She terms Adorno's critique of Heidegger for the disconnect between his moral and political philosophy 'embarrassing', as Adorno's own writings evince such a gap.[18] His praxis is a praxis of thought; although it is more nuanced than a Marxian perspective, it has lost its emancipatory edge because of an emphasis on method and an abstraction from socio-historical particulars. Adorno's negative dialectics were developed as a response to the Hegelian dialectic; however, he inherits Marx's non-speculative misreading of Hegel, interpreting Hegel's thought as a series of oppositions and characterising him as a 'dialectical dogmatist'[19] whose thought perpetuates the *status quo*.[20]

Rose's critique of Adorno does not do him justice; his interpretation of Hegel was much more nuanced than she gave him credit for, and his later writings, in particular, are concerned with broader social analysis and political intervention.[21] Although Adorno does not make a clear

[16] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 141.
[17] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 37.
[18] Rose, *The Melancholy Science*, p. 76.
[19] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 62.
[20] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 331.
[21] Adorno was periodically involved in public education, particularly upon his return to Germany after exile in 1949, and gave a number of radio broadcasts and public lectures in the hope of encouraging wider social critique. See, for example, Adorno, 'Education after Auschwitz'; Adorno, 'What does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?'. See also Lydia Goehr 'Reviewing Adorno: Public Opinion and Critique' in Theodor W Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005) pp. xiii-lvi.

distinction between Hegel's dialectical and speculative thought, he does discuss its speculative core and his concept of mediation enables him to hold oppositions together in thought and to examine the ways in which they constitute one another. Furthermore, despite his rejection of Hegel's identity thinking and his doctrine of absolute spirit, he found in these aspects of Hegel's thought a 'wholesome corrective' that could be used to counter ungrounded, fragmentary poststructural thought, and in the ideal of eventual reconciliation, Adorno found an important utopian counter to bleak reality. However, Adorno's reading of Hegel is essentially negative; even his insistence on the idea of utopia is a negative move. Although he gestures towards a more positive, politically-engaged way of being in the world, Rose's work on mourning and political risk speaks more directly to the problem of coming to terms with the past. In the following section, I explore Rose's speculative account of Hegel, focusing particularly on the 'trinity of ideas' that he developed in reply to the limitations of Kantian thought: phenomenology, absolute ethical life, and logic. I then examine her writings on the broken middle, the violent diremption of law and ethics, and the struggle to negotiate this brokenness without proposing to mend it.

From Dialectics to Speculative Thought

Rose's criticisms of Marxian-influenced interpretations of Hegel's thought in *The Melancholy Science* prompted a deeper engagement with Hegel; indeed, this became the focus of her next

project, *Hegel Contra Sociology*.[22] In this book, Rose outlines the wide variety of readings inspired by Hegel's work, and convincingly proffers an alternative account of his thought. Her distinctive re-reading of Hegel portrays him speculatively and comprehensively.[23] In many ways, Rose's work on Hegel lays the foundation for her subsequent thought; some understanding of her interpretation of his thought is necessary if one is to understand her later work.[24]

Rose's reading of Hegel posits a speculative account of his work. She does not separate his method (phenomenology) from his system (the idea of an absolute ethical life); she sees these as inextricable parts of the whole of his thought. Hegel himself referred to his thinking as speculative, and distinguished it from dialectical thinking.[25] In a letter to Friedrich Immanuel Niethammer dated 23 October 1812, Hegel considers the problem of how to introduce schoolchildren to philosophy.[26] He distinguishes three forms of philosophical reasoning: abstract, dialectical, and speculative. Abstract thought, he maintains, takes place primarily in the realm of thought and is 'the so-called understanding which holds determinations fast and comes to know them in their fixed distinction'. Dialectical thought, in contrast, is 'the movement and confusion of such fixed determinateness; it is negative reason...' Hegel maintains that

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[22] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*.
[23] I do not engage with other interpretations of Hegel's thought in this chapter, as my purpose in exploring Rose's account of Hegel is to facilitate a deeper understanding of her thought, not to evaluate her interpretation in the light of others.
[24] For a more accessible speculative account of Hegel, see Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, particularly Chapter Two: 'Philosophy as the Task of Comprehension'. Hutchings' interpretation of Hegel is influenced by Rose's holistic approach (p. 161, fn. 2) and her book demonstrates how Hegel can be used as a resource for moving beyond dualistic thinking (with particular reference to feminist thought).
[25] However, he was not consistent in this distinction, and at times uses speculative and dialectical interchangeably. I am grateful to John Milbank for this observation (personal communication, 30 January 2008).
[26] Hegel, *The Letters*, trans. Clark Butler and Christine Seiler (Bloomingham: Indiana University Press, 1984), pp. 280-282, cited in Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, pp. 60-61.

speculative reason, on the other hand, is ‘positive reason, the spiritual, and it alone is really philosophical’. He goes on to describe it in more detail:

> ...the truly speculative form [is] knowledge of what is opposed in its very oneness, more precisely, the knowledge that the opposites are in truth one. Only this speculative stage is truly philosophical. It is naturally the most difficult; it is the truth...[l]aw, self-consciousness, the practical in general already contain in and for themselves the principles or beginnings of the speculative. And of spirit and the spiritual there is, moreover, in truth not even a single nonspeculative word that can be said; for spirit is unity in itself with otherness.[27]

The speculative form maintains that it is impossible to comprehend concepts in isolation; they must always be thought in relation to their other: ‘each “thing” is defined by not being another, lives in and only in the absence of another, and so “passes over” from being a discrete object to being a moment in a complex movement’.[28] It is a continual interplay between irreconcilable opposites—particular and universal, religion and state—that attends to the ways in which they constitute one another (‘are in truth one’) whilst also acknowledging their diremption, their brokenness, a brokenness that cannot be fully mended. However, there is always an element of promise in speculative thought—the utopian hope that Adorno pointed to in his studies of Hegel—the promise of eventual reconciliation. It is in the spirit of speculative reason that Rose reads Hegel’s thought and that she finds resources for thinking ethically and politically.[29]

Hegel’s writings have provided inspiration to thinkers across the spectrum in sociology. Those influenced by him are generally characterised as falling into one of two camps: right-Hegelian or

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[27] Hegel, *The Letters*, pp. 280-282, cited in Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, pp. 60-61.
[28] Rowan Williams, ‘Logic and Spirit in Hegel’, in Phillip Blond (ed.), *Post-Secular Philosophy: Between Philosophy and Theology* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 118.
[29] I am grateful to John Milbank for pushing me to be clearer about the nature of speculative thought (personal communication, 30 January 2008).

left-Hegelian. A right-Hegelian reading maintains that 'the real is rational' and supports a conservative status-quo in law and religion.[30] It emphasises the world of the mind and ideas, rather than the world of existing concrete reality. During the 1840s and 1850s, this was the semi-official philosophical view in Berlin; Hegel was perceived as having elevated Protestant Christianity and the Prussian state to a position of supremacy in world history.[31] In contrast, a left-Hegelian reading maintains that 'the rational is real', that philosophy should study the concrete realities of human experience.[32] Thinkers such as Ludwig Feuerbach and Karl Marx criticised Hegel for his emphasis on abstract ideas at the expense of the material; Marx maintained that for Hegel '[t]he real becomes an appearance'.[33] However, they also perceived in Hegel's writings resources that could be used to oppose existing law and religion, separating his dialectical method from the larger body of his work, and especially from his metaphysics.

According to Rose, however, both these traditions of interpretation have 'mystified' Hegel's thought.[34] Both readings fail to understand the speculative nature of Hegel's thought, which grew out of his critique of the abstract oppositions of finite and infinite, phenomena and noumena, to be found in Kant and Fichte. Both readings also omit Hegel's notion of the 'absolute'. In Rose's words:

> In their very different ways, both the non-Marxist and the Marxist critiques of Hegel attempt to drop the notion of the 'absolute', but, at the same time, retain the social

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[30] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 211.
[31] For a modern incarnation of a right-Hegelian thinker, see Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992).
[32] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 211.
[33] Karl Marx, 'Critique of Hegel's "Philosophy of Right"', in David McLellan (ed.), *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 27.
[34] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 41.

> import of Hegel's thought. In the case of non-Marxist sociology, the attempt depends on extracting a social object from Hegel's philosophy, 'objective spirit'. In the case of Marxism, the attempt depends on extracting a 'method' whose use will reveal social contradictions. But the 'absolute' is not an optional extra, as it were. As we shall see, Hegel's philosophy has *no* social import if the absolute is banished or suppressed, if the absolute cannot be thought.[35]

Rose thus proffers an alternative reading: one that sees Hegel's system and method as inextricably linked and does not attempt to ignore his concept of the absolute. Her speculative account of his thought attempts to demystify Hegel and sees him as a resource for thinking ethically and politically.[36]

Hegel Contra Kant

In order to understand Rose's speculative account of Hegel, one must have some understanding of Hegel's critique of Kant and Fichte; his thought developed out of his reaction to the limitations of theirs. Kant's transcendental method attempts to delineate universal principles and laws that apply generally, regardless of particularity. According to Kant, we can only know the *finite*; the *infinite* is unknowable. Hegel refutes this approach to the social world. He maintains that we cannot restrict the realm of knowledge to the finite; this limits our understanding of ourselves and our place in the socio-historical world. In Rose's words:

> The unknowability of what Kant calls, among other names, the 'unconditioned' or the 'infinite' results in the unknowability of ourselves, both as subjects of experience, 'the transcendental unity of apperception', and as moral agents capable of freedom. *Pari*

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[35] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 42.
[36] Rose's use of Hegel as a resource for thinking ethically and politically is clearest in her later works: *Mourning Becomes the Law* and *Judaism and Modernity*.

> *passu*, the unknowability of ourselves means that the social, political and historical determinants of all knowledge and all action remain unknown and unknowable…[37]

Kant's 'neutral method' closes off knowledge rather than facilitating it. It does not allow us to think beyond what is; as such, we lose part of our humanness, our ability to think in the realm of possibility. If we cannot know ourselves, and if the infinite is designated 'unknowable', then our power to imagine and change those social and political conditions that underpin our existence is limited.

Rose identifies a 'trinity of ideas' that Hegel puts in the place of Kant's transcendental method: 'the idea of a phenomenology, the idea of absolute ethical life (*absolute Sittlichkeit*), and the idea of a logic'.[38] These ideas are at the heart of Rose's reading of Hegel and they deserve consideration in turn.

The idea of a phenomenology is central to Hegel's thought and is posited as a different theoretical approach to knowing to that proffered by Kant. Simply put, phenomenology is 'the immanent exploration of how things are experienced'[39] and the *Phenomenology of Spirit*[40] traces the development of human consciousness and capacity for judgement in the context of the philosophy of science, ethics, European history, art, and religion. Perhaps not surprisingly, given its wide-ranging nature, the *Phenomenology* has been subject to chronic misreading. Right-Hegelians interpret it conservatively, seeing it as a teleological account of the 'end of

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[37] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 45.
[38] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 45.
[39] Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, p. 35.
[40] Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*.

history'[41] and using it as a justification for a strong state and religion. Left-Hegelians reject the substance of the *Phenomenology*, which they perceive as totalitarian, but adopt Hegel's dialectical method, which they deem revolutionary. However, both of these are non-speculative readings that fail to capture the kernel of Hegel's thought. Hegel's phenomenological method was a response to Kant's account of knowing, positing an alternative to Kant's sharp distinctions between such oppositions as: things as we perceive them (phenomena) and things as they are in themselves (noumena), reason and nature, finite and infinite. Rose maintains:

> The only consistent way to criticise Kant's philosophy of consciousness is to show that the contradiction which a methodological, or any natural, consciousness falls into when it considers the object to be external, can itself provide the occasion for a change in that consciousness and in its definition of its object. The new procedure and the new definition of the object may also be contradictory, in which case they, too, will change, until the two become adequate to each other.[42]

The *Phenomenology* has been portrayed as presenting a series of dualisms that are reconciled in favour of one or the other and as presenting a strong teleology towards universalism and the good state. However, this was not Hegel's intention; he sought knowledge of the 'whole', a speculative knowledge that moved beyond Kantian thinking in terms of binary opposites.[43]

Hegel's idea of an absolute ethical life (*absolute Sittlichkeit*) was intended as an alternative means of thinking Kant's justification of moral judgements, which always proceeded from, and never exceeded, the finite. Hegel's reference to the absolute does not refer to a 'known' infinite; on the contrary, it refers to an infinite that is always present but not yet grasped, an infinite that

[41] See, for example, Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*.
[42] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, pp. 45-46.
[43] Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*, pp. 32-44.

should not be dismissed from the outset as unknowable. The 'absolute' thus refers to 'the unity of the finite and the infinite'; *Sittlichkeit*, 'ethical life', refers to 'the unity of the realms of morality and legality'. *Contra* Kant, one cannot pre-judge morality or ethical life:

> …the morality of an action cannot be 'judged' apart from the whole context of its possibility. It cannot be judged by separating its morality from its legality, by separating its meaning from the social whole.[44]

Thinking the absolute, therefore, means thinking in terms of past and present, morality and legality, finite and infinite. It is comprehensive thought, and it is worked towards and achieved, not pre-decided. Contrary to popular conceptions of Hegel's idea of absolute ethical life, then, it is not closed and totalitarian but open and revisable.

Thirdly, Hegel's idea of a logic refers to his work *Science of Logic*:[45] another phenomenological work in which 'method' is not discussed but demonstrated through the description of a series of experiences. Rose asserts that the 'experiences of logic' do not illustrate the progression of a natural consciousness learning from its mistakes; instead: 'the experience of philosophical consciousness in the *Logic* is to *rediscover* the unity of theoretical and moral reason and natural, finite consciousness through the contradictions of the history of philosophy'.[46] Rather than conceding a disconnect between theoretical and moral reasoning, as the idea of phenomenology (as an alternative to theoretical reasoning) and the idea of absolute ethical life (as an alternative to practical moral reasoning) might suggest, the idea of a logic presupposes the unification of theoretical and practical reasoning, with a combination of the preceding ideas. Hegel does not

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[44] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 47.
[45] Georg W. Hegel, *Science of Logic*, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).
[46] Rose, *Hegel Contra Sociology*, p. 47.

posit an alternative; rather, he demonstrates it through narrative, through accounts of consciousness on a journey to wholeness through the gradual realisation and reconciliation of contradictory experiences of awareness.

Rose's speculative account of Hegel's thought stands in stark contrast to Kantian thought, which falls 'inside ethics', proposing universal guidelines that apply regardless of socio-historical context and denying knowledge of the infinite. Hegel's thought falls 'outside ethics': it is neither relentlessly immanent nor centrally concerned with the question of how we ought to live our lives. Any duties that can be gleaned from Hegel's thought are not intended to stand alone as a guide to living; they do not form a coherent system of thought and will inevitably provide conflicting guidelines.[47] Instead, making decisions speculatively requires the exercise of *judgement* in the light of broader social, political and historical processes.

The Broken Middle

Rose carried her speculative account of Hegel's work into her subsequent projects: her reading of Hegel provides the foundation for everything that follows. Her first work focuses on Adorno's neo-Marxist critical social theory; in her later works, it is postmodernism that attracts the bulk of her often devastating critique. Rose agrees with the postmodern position that contemporary law has given rise to 'proud and deadly dualisms'[48] which must be transcended and that discourses of

[47] See the Introduction and Chapter One of this thesis. See also Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 11-28, 46-52.
[48] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 76.

human rights mask the realities of inequality and domination.[49] However, she disagrees with the postmodern assertion that human law is inherently violent:[50] 'For if all human law is sheer violence, if there is no positive or symbolic law to be acknowledged…then there can be *no work*, no exploring of the legacy of ambivalence, working through the contradictory emotions aroused by bereavement'.[51] She describes postmodernism as '*despairing rationalism without reason*'[52] and argues that

> by disqualifying universal notions of justice, freedom, and the good, for being inveterately 'metaphysical', for colonising and suppressing their others with the violence consequent on the chimera of correspondence, 'postmodernism' has no imagination for its own implied ground in justice, freedom and the good.[53]

Postmodern theorists rightly criticise the liberal approach to ethics for positing an ideal world in which rights are given and duties performed; this picture abstracts from the gritty realities of contemporary life. However, Rose believes that just as liberals often operate in a fantasy world where easy answers reign, so too do postmoderns. A postmodern approach to ethics sees the suffering and trauma pervasive in modern life and yet all too often shies away from reflecting on the broader social processes that might facilitate particular suffering and from taking the risk of political action. Rose equally abhors this reluctance to engage in the *work* of the political, urging instead an approach that attends to particular suffering but also insists on public reflection and working through.

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[49] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 71.
[50] See, for example, Derrida, 'Force of Law'.
[51] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 70.
[52] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 7, emphasis in original.
[53] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 7.

In Rose's most challenging work, *The Broken Middle*, she deepens her critique of old (liberal) and new (postmodern) philosophy—the old, for its prescription and progressivism, and the new, for its rejection of the struggle to know and to judge. Drawing on Hegel's speculative thinking, she asserts the need for 'philosophy's grey in grey';[54] a 'grey in grey' that contrasts with the 'colour on colour' of postmodernity, with its exuberant rejection of traditional philosophy. She continues:

> Philosophy's 'grey in grey' was never intended to damage its endeavour: to keep it quiescent, modestly contemplative, servile or resigned. This subtle array, this grey in grey, would turn hubris not into humility but into motile configuration. Grey in grey warns against philosophy's pride of *Sollen*, against any proscription or prescription, any imposition of ideals, imaginary communities or 'progressive narrations'. Instead, the 'idealizations' of philosophy would acknowledge and recognize actuality and not force or fantasize it. They act as the third, the middle, their own effectivity at stake between the potentiality and actuality of the world and engaging at the point where the two come into a changed relation: not *ex post facto* justification, even less *a priori* rejuvenation, but reconfiguration, oppositional yet vital—*something understood*.[55]

Rose's subtle philosophical approach does not set forth prescriptions based on the abstract reasoning of an imagined community of people, unlike a Rawlsian or cosmopolitan approach to ethics. She perceives such an approach as inexorably rules-bound and lacking in nuance or recognition of contingency. However, her approach also sets its face against a sweeping rejection of the insights of 'Western metaphysics'; it acknowledges the importance of struggling with the contraries of freedom and unfreedom, law and morality.[56] Like Adorno's negative dialectics, Rose's speculative approach refuses to privilege one concept over its opposite; she argues that both sides of a binary opposition must be continually engaged with and negotiated.

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[54] Gillian Rose, *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. xi.
[55] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xi, emphasis in original.
[56] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, pp. xii-xiii.

The 'broken middle' to which Rose refers can be characterised in several ways: a break between the potentiality and actuality of the world, between universal and particular, between freedom and unfreedom, between legality and morality. It is both modern and ancient: Rose maintains that the 'shape of life' we are experiencing now 'has always been already ancient'.[57] *The Broken Middle* is a reaction to an attempt on the part of postmodern thinkers to mend this brokenness; an attempt that Rose deems doomed to failure.

> [Postmodern thought] would mend the diremption of law and ethics by turning the struggle between universality, particularity and singularity into a general sociology of control. Yet the security of this new spectatorship is undermined by the tension of freedom and unfreedom which it cannot acknowledge for it has disqualified the actuality of any oppositions which might initiate process and pain—any risk of coming to know.[58]

Rather than negotiating the broken middle, postmodern thought looks towards a (premature) reconciliation or an eventual redemption;[59] in so doing, however, it passes over the struggle of living in a world full of contradiction and suffering.

In *The Broken Middle*, Rose builds on her previous work, embarking on a deeper exploration of Hegel's diremption of law and ethics.[60] The Broken Middle draws on a variety of thinkers, with

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[57] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xi.

[58] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xiii.

[59] For example, the idea of messianic redemption in Walter Benjamin's writings, which has more in common in this respect with poststructural thought than with Marxist thought in the tradition of the Frankfurt School. See Benjamin, 'Theses on the Philosophy of History', in *Illuminations*, pp. 245-255. For a discussion of Benjamin's notion of messianism, see Anson Rabinbach, *In the Shadow of Catastrophe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997). For an engagement with contemporary writing that draws on Benjamin's messianism, see Benjamin Arditi, 'Talkin' 'bout a Revolution: the End of Mourning', in Arditi, *Politics on the Edges of Liberalism*, pp. 107-147.

a particular focus on Søren Kierkegaard. Just as in *Dialectic of Nihilism* Rose reinterprets Nietzsche, rescuing him from the charge of 'antinomian nihilism', in *The Broken Middle*, Rose recasts Kierkegaard, rescuing him from the charge of 'antinomian repetition'. Rose argues that both are perceived as being fundamentally opposed to law and knowledge, but maintains that these are serious misreadings. Rose's alternative reading of Nietzsche and Kierkegaard 'returns diremption to where it cannot be overcome in exclusive thought or in partial action—as long as its political history persists. The complementarity of comprehension to diremption involves reflection on what may be ventured—without mending diremption in heaven or on earth'.[61] Rose does not propose a negotiation of the middle that is able to fix what is broken; that would be 'euporia', the easy way.[62] Instead, she draws on thinkers such as Hegel and Kierkegaard who suggest that the aporias, the difficulties, of life must be engaged and negotiated.

Rose is attracted to the struggles apparent in Kierkegaard's thought and to his willingness to wrestle with the difficult questions of ethics and law without reaching settled conclusions. Like Hegel, Kierkegaard brings the non-immanent concept of 'Revelation' to philosophy, without systematising it or pointing to a realised or realisable redemption. For both thinkers, 'Revelation serves to leave the ethical open and unresolved'.[63] Negotiating life is not easy; it must be undertaken with 'fear and trembling'.[64]

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[60] Rose uses the term 'diremption' to refer to a rending in two, but not of something that was perfectly unified in the first place: '"Diremption" draws attention to the trauma of separation of that which was, however, as in marriage, *not* originally united' (*The Broken Middle*, p. 236).
[61] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xv.
[62] Rose, *Love's Work*, pp. 115-116.
[63] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 18.
[64] A reference to Kierkegaard's book by that name: Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling* (London: Penguin Books, 1985).

Kierkegaard did not write simply as himself; he employed a number of pseudonyms and wrote from their perspectives as well. This has not always been taken into account in the reception and analysis of his writings and Rose maintains that this has facilitated their misinterpretation. In the guise of *de silentio*, one of his pseudonyms, Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* tells the story of Abraham preparing to sacrifice his son Isaac on Mount Moriah, a story that, if laboured over, will cause fear and trembling.[65] Adorno points to the dialectical nature of *Fear and Trembling*, characterising it as pitting against each other such oppositions as spirit versus nature and loss versus gain, with the oppositions eventually being mythically reconciled in a 'paradoxical sacrifice'.[66] However, according to Rose, in his retelling of the story, *de silentio* does not present it in terms of oppositions. Instead,

> *de silentio* pits story against story, crisis against crisis, to educate the reader by bringing out the difference between 'resignation', which accepts the opposed dichotomies of loss and gain, infinite and finite, spirit and nature; and 'faith', which is repetition or plenitude without possession or presence. These *positions* are not *oppositions* – they can be suffered simultaneously. They do not even share the *tertium comparationis* of being 'positions': the former, 'resignation', may be a position – a 'swimming' position: for or against the tide of infinite pain – but the latter, 'faith', is a matter of 'floating': for which *de silentio* admits he is not strong enough.[67]

Adorno's reading of *Fear and Trembling* perceives reconciliations where they do not occur, and thus misses the *struggle*, the anguish, and the confessions of failure. However, according to Rose, *di silentio* presents Abraham's story in order to illustrate the *risk* of living: 'life must be risked in order to be gained...only by discovering the limits of life—death—is "life" itself

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[65] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 11.
[66] See Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*.
[67] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, pp. 14-15.

discovered, and recalcitrant otherness opens its potentialities and possibilities'.[68] *de silentio* sets aside ethical questions in his retelling of this story; this 'suspension of the ethical' is intended to set aside what we do and do not know about the story; it aims to transform us into 'contemporaneous witness' rather than 'witness at second hand'.[69] In so doing, by placing us in the position of Abraham, *de silentio* explores the 'development of individual faith in its violent encounter with love and law'.[70]

The idea of *struggle* is fundamental to Rose's negotiation of the Broken Middle, and for her, this is one of the primary attractions of Kierkegaard's thought. In an entry on Luther,[71] Kierkegaard points out the dangers of Luther's Protestantism, which turned religion into politics, replacing the authority of the Pope with the authority of the State.[72] In Rose's words:

> Instead of 'arousing restlessness' and making spiritual life 'more strenuous', Luther makes it soothing and reassuring. Transfiguration of anguish, which occurred in Luther's own case after twenty years of fear and trembling and of spiritual and scholarly discipline, is universalized by Protestantism so that it is made available for all – without any 'one' undergoing the intensity of Luther's testing. 'This extremely powerful resource and reassurance' becomes the cloak of an inwardness which everyone has the licence to counterfeit.[73]

Luther was a reformer who sought to right the wrongs he perceived in Christianity under the Pope. However, despite the suffering and struggle of his own spiritual journey, what he proclaimed was a Protestantism that encouraged an inward faith and allowed outward

[68] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 16.
[69] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p.148.
[70] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 151.
[71] 'Luther', in *Soren Kierkegaard's Journals and Papers*, Vol. 3, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1970) cited in Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 157.
[72] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 157.
[73] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, pp. 157-158.

compromise with the established secular authority in the pursuit of selfish individualism. Luther's emphasis on faith to the detriment of works was just as dangerous as the prior emphasis on works to the detriment of faith. Kierkegaard warns that Christians must be aware of and sit with both dangers – the 'double danger' that is the mark of 'proper' Christianity – in order to avoid falling into the opposite of any spiritual, social or political inversion.[74] One must remain with the 'anxiety of beginning and equivocation of the middle',[75] to use Rose's own terms.

But how does one rediscover this 'equivocation of the middle'? Rose maintains that to discover the political, the ethical must be suspended.[76] The equivocation of the middle comes about when one stands in the present with an understanding of the historical processes that have determined the present; when one perceives the specific histories and inversions that have shaped one's culture; when one perceives the difficulty in staking oneself politically but yet realises that one must confront the aporia of negotiating the break between universal and particular—without taking refuge in individualism or communitarianism and thus falling into yet another inversion. Knowledge of the political present through an understanding of the historical processes that formed it enables one to imagine the 'possibility of the ethical'—to see glimpses of the absolute in the present and to stake oneself, placing oneself in the middle: trying, failing, learning, and trying again.

Hegel's phenomenology is an example *par excellence* of the difficulties of negotiating the broken middle. Hegel addresses the 'double danger' of 'aporetic and agapic danger'. The

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[74] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p.158.
[75] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 159.
[76] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 163.

aporetic danger is the danger of legal status, dramatised by Hegel as 'the spiritual animal kingdom'. 'Spiritual' refers to universal law, the legally enshrined 'kingdom of ends' that serves the good of all, and 'animal' to the reality of politics, where one's own interests are served above those of the other.[77] In modern law, the stated spiritual goal is subject to animal reality: 'modern law is that of *legal status*, where those with subjective rights and subjective ends deceive themselves and others that they act for the universal when they care only for their own interests'.[78] The aporetic danger, then, is the danger of self-interest cloaked as moral, law abiding behaviour, which trumps universal good.

The second danger Hegel addresses is that of agapic danger, where a denial of the world and of politics accompanies pietism. Goethe's story 'the beautiful soul' is central to his novel *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and borrowed by Hegel in *Phenomenology of Spirit* to illustrate this danger. It portrays an educated aristocratic woman who rejects the pleasures of worldly life so as to develop her inner religious piety. However, she is unable to translate this piety into useful public life. This picture of 'the beautiful soul' represents the asceticism of Protestant inwardness as understood by Goethe and Hegel, and, later, Walter Benjamin. In Rose's words, '[h]ypertrophy of the inner life is correlated with atrophy of political participation'.[79] The agapic danger explored in the story of 'the beautiful soul' is also pointed to by Hegel, Weber, and Kierkegaard as the Pietism of the late eighteenth century—the moment when the Lutheran reform is turned on its head. In Pietism, 'politics [is] delivered to the heart of religion; it reproduces inner poverty and outer ruthlessness at the collective as well as at the individual

[77] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 174.
[78] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 73.
[79] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 180. See also Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, pp. 383-409.

level'.[80] A withdrawal from political life and responsibility in the name of piety produces a selfish individualism.

Rather than fall prey to either danger—aporetic or agapic—one must remain in the equivocation of the middle; negotiating the diremption of law and ethics. The anxiety to which Rose continually refers—the 'anxiety of beginning which is equally the beginning of anxiety'[81]—is experienced in relation to the law and to ethics. The 'law' to which Rose refers is the form that emerges from a negotiation of the middle: '"Law"...emerges as the predicament which elicits form out of the equivocation of the ethical and the anxiety of beginning. "Law" emerges as the agon of these [Kierkegaard and Kafka's] authorships'.[82] The form of law always already exists; indeed, Rose asserts that Kierkegaard's authorship is ethical precisely because of the assumption of an already-given law.[83] It can never be fully known; however, we cannot abandon the attempt to articulate it. The anxiety, then, arises as one begins to negotiate this law. Rose contrasts Kierkegaard's position with a postmodern one, which by refusing the system of law, refuses anxiety—paradoxically creating certainty in the name of uncertainty:

> When attention is focused *at the beginning* of a work on discrediting the System, its historicism, its closure etc., in the name of existential 'freedom' or the released 'other', this, in effect, proudly obsoletes 'freedom' and otherness – political or existential. Such apparent house-clearing amounts to a recollection which is itself a refusal, an unreadiness, for anxiety. It awards itself a certainty while claiming to breed no certainties.[84]

[80] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 178.
[81] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 85.
[82] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 84.
[83] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 87.
[84] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. 88.

Passing over the contradictions and challenges of law and ethics in favour of the concept of the moment—such as freedom or identity—ruins ethical initiative, initiative which would think speculatively, engaging in the *work* of negotiating the broken middle.

The Broken Middle poses a political challenge: how might we think differently about politics? How can we negotiate the challenges of living in a broken world? The brokenness to which Rose refers has been discussed in different ways by different thinkers: Hegel's diremption of law and ethics, Benjamin's decay of experience,[85] and Adorno and Horkheimer's dialectic of enlightenment.[86] For some, it is exemplified by the Holocaust, the *Shoah*, which they perceive as the ultimate expression of the brokenness of modernity. As we saw in the previous chapter, Adorno responded to this brokenness with negative dialectics and the promise that things might yet get better. However, Rose is dissatisfied with mere glimpses of hope in a broken world. Instead, she articulates a two-fold response of mourning and political risk: one that works through the traumas of modernity, mourning losses, whilst also taking the risk of acting politically.

[85] Howard Caygill, *Walter Benjamin: The Colour of Experience* (London: Routledge, 2006).
[86] Adorno and Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*.

Mourning and Political Risk:

A Response to the Brokenness of Modernity

Rose's embedded and emphatic approach to ethics and the political emerges from an engagement with the trauma that results from a diremption of law and ethics in modernity, an engagement that is built upon a speculative reading of Hegel's thought. The trauma arising out of the broken middle can be conceptualised on two levels: actual, historical trauma and a more generalised, existential trauma. Dominick LaCapra distinguishes between historical and structural trauma. He notes that historical trauma is associated with a specific event or loss and that only the particular individuals who experience a historically-specific traumatic event experience historical trauma.[87] Structural trauma, in contrast, is not associated with an event or limited to particular persons; instead, it is linked to the potentiality of historical trauma and everyone may suffer the anxiety associated with it.[88] Rose's conception of trauma encompasses both aspects. She speaks of the 'disasters of modernity',[89] whereby much is promised but not delivered; the persistence of suffering and trauma is a constant reminder of modernity's shortcomings.

Approaches to suffering in a liberal framework tend to involve bestowing rights upon individuals; this is intended to provide a safety-net against the worst atrocities, but does not assess the ability of those affected to claim those rights, remaining abstract and removed from

[87] Note that not everyone that suffers historical trauma suffers clinical levels of trauma as defined by the American Psychiatric Association in DSM-IV. American Psychological Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, 4th edition, (Washington: American Psychiatric Publishing, 2004).
[88] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, pp. 78-82.
[89] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 76.

the political. Rose claims that the Enlightenment reason in which modern law is grounded is disembedded and disembodied:

> …grounded in an overweening claim to absolute and universal authority, without awareness of history, language or locality, enlightened reason sweeps all particularity and peculiarity from its path.[90]

Liberal ethics pass over the traumas of modern life, turning too quickly to the codification of rules in order to create a safer world.

While liberal approaches too often forget the suffering that prompted reflection, postmodern approaches too often remain focused on actual and existential losses without working through those losses and moving forward to social and political (re)engagement.

> Post-modernism in its renunciation of reason, power, and truth identifies itself as a process of endless mourning, lamenting the loss of securities which, on its own argument, were none such. Yet this everlasting melancholia accurately monitors the refusal to let go…[91]

Approaches to suffering in a postmodern framework tend to advocate the encircling of trauma—an endless mourning that remains in the past lest the pain be forgot.[92] However, Rose argues that we cannot mourn personal, communal and global suffering without also taking the risk of acting politically.

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[90] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 128.
[91] Rose, *Mourning*, p. 11.
[92] See, for example, Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*, pp. 140-142; Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, pp. 11-24; Slavoj Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 272-273.

Rose offers an approach to ethics that is neither liberal nor poststructural; it is reflective, but politically engaged. She is critical of instrumental reasoning, but does not turn her face against reason in general. She argues that while 'exclusive and excluding reason' is not to be encouraged, neither is 'exclusive otherness'.[93] On the contrary, she advocates a nuanced, self-aware and empathic reason that she maintains is the cornerstone of an ethical and politically engaged life. She describes such reason as 'relational, responsible, and reconstructive' and 'full of surprises'.[94] We can never fully know or know with certainty, but we must never give up the attempt. Rose draws on Hegelian speculative thought in her attempts to negotiate the broken middle, reaching towards 'the possibility of an ethics which does not remain naïve and ignorant of its historical and political presuppositions and hence of its likely outcomes'.[95]

In the remainder of this chapter, I outline Rose's twofold response to the trauma so pervasive in our modern world: mourning and political risk. This response was most clearly outlined in her posthumously published *Mourning Becomes the Law* and is framed in opposition to a postmodern response to brokenness of modernity. Before turning to Rose's response, however, I first outline that which she is reacting against: aberrated mourning in the face of brokenness.

Responses to trauma: Benjamin and aberrated mourning

In the wake of the World Wars I and II, the dominant narratives in response to the pain of those suffering loss, disfigurement, and mental torture were those of heroism and sacrifice for the greater good of ruler and country. However, challenges to traditional forms arose both in

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[93] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 4.
[94] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, pp. 4, 9.
[95] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, pp. 70-71.

popular response and in political thought, particularly after the horrors of World War II and the Holocaust. Walter Benjamin was ahead of his time in prefiguring this disaffection; he profoundly opposed traditional forms of mourning from his early writings. He detested the culture of commemoration that sprung up following the First World War; he believed that monuments that honour the sacrifice of those who died in the war and that pay homage to national unity prematurely restore order and acceptance to traumatised communities. In his writings, Benjamin emphatically rejects responses to suffering that offer false consolation and refuses to tarry with the pain and confusion of the horrors of war. He is against a collective 'working through' of grief: he maintains that collective mourning discourages individuals from looking more deeply at their pain, a pain that he believes has deeper sources than war alone. Benjamin argues that the allegedly healthy process of working through pain only forecloses deeper consideration of the catastrophe.[96]

Benjamin's reflections on Baudelaire provide a window on to his perspective on war and trauma. He is highly critical of Baudelaire's 'shock-parrying': 'Baudelaire made it his business to parry the shocks [of modern life], no matter where they might come from, with his spiritual and his physical self'.[97] He argues that Baudelaire's shock-parrying was tantamount to self-anaesthesia, a refusal to register pain in any depth in order to impose control upon his world. Benjamin suggests instead that we respond to war and the ensuing suffering with a ritualistic melancholy that, in Martin Jay's words, would 'keep the wound open in the hope of some later utopian

[96] Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, pp. 11-24.
[97] Walter Benjamin, 'On Some Motifs in Baudelaire' in Benjamin, *Illuminations*, p. 160.

redemption, understanding ritual and repetition as a placeholder for a future happiness'.[98] His attraction to the Baroque mourning play *Trauerspiel* is outlined in his work *Origin of German Trauerspiel*. He advocates an open-ended melancholy, a melancholy that holds fast until the deeper sources of pain are addressed.[99]

Although Benjamin rightly opposes the premature restoration of order and a veneration of war, the mourning that he advocates shuts off the possibility of working through. LaCapra terms it *impossible mourning*, saying that the politics it engenders is 'often a blind messianism…even at times apocalyptic politics or what I call "hope in a blank utopia"'.[100] Rose terms it *aberrated mourning*—'the mournfulness of desertion',[101] a 'rigid and petrified'[102] mourning that precludes the exercise of political judgement and engagement. She points to the profoundly negative consequences of unmourned loss, not just for the individuals concerned, but for society as a whole.[103] Against Benjamin's *Angelus Novus*, the angel of history that watches, frozen in horror, as the debris of history piles up before him, Rose posits another of Klee's angels, *Angelus Dubiosus*:

> …hybrid of hubris and humility—who makes mistakes, for whom things go wrong, who constantly discovers its own faults and failings, yet who still persists in the pain of

[98] Jay, *Refractions of Violence*, p. 22.
[99] More recent poststructural accounts of trauma advocate a similar response, as discussed in Chapter Two. In International Relations, Edkins draws on Žižek's work to emphasise the need to encircle trauma, again and again, in order to prevent its domestication and depoliticisation (Edkins, *Poststructuralism and International Relations*; Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*; Žižek, *For They Know Not What They Do*).
[100] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 152.
[101] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, pp. 186-187.
[102] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 195.
[103] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 51.

> staking itself, with the courage to initiate action and the commitment to go on and on, learning from those mistakes and risking new ventures.[104]

She describes this angel as 'the humorous witness who must endure'.[105] Not for this angel the speechlessness and inaction that characterises Benjamin's traumatised angel. *Angelus Dubiosus* gives voice to its suffering and moves forward (and backward) in an attempt to reengage ethically and politically.

Responses to trauma: Rose's mourning and political risk

Rose's criticisms of Benjamin mirror her criticisms of postmodern approaches to ethics, which she maintains '[proceed] dualistically and deconstructively'. Against these, Rose poses her own response, which she maintains 'comprehends the dualisms and deconstructions of the first response as the dynamic movement of a political history which can be expounded speculatively out of the broken middle'. She describes her response as: 'comic—the comedy of absolute spirit, *inaugurated* mourning'.[106] By comedy, Rose refers to the provisional and contingent nature of any response, whereby 'our aims and outcomes constantly mismatch each other, and provoke yet another revised aim, action and discordant outcome'.[107] This response is most clearly elucidated in *Mourning Becomes the Law*. It has two dimensions—mourning and political risk—and draws on Jewish hermeneutical thought to offer an alternative reflective yet positive way of being and acting in a broken world. I examine these strands of Rose's response in turn.

[104] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity,* p. 10.
[105] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 209.
[106] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 71.
[107] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 72.

Inaugurated mourning

Rose proposes that our first response to trauma be one of mourning: not an unthinking, passive melancholy, but a self-reflective, active *work* of mourning, a mourning she terms *inaugurated mourning*. '[*I*]*naugurated* mourning requires the relation to law that is presented by *the comedy of absolute spirit* as found in Hegel's *Phenomenology*'.[108] That is, it requires a constant negotiation and renegotiation of individual and communal actions in light of (often unintended) consequences, as well as a continual evaluation and re-evaluation of laws and institutions in the light of their effects on local, regional and global politics.

Inaugurated mourning is not easy; it involves *work*. It is the 'the ability to know and be known'.[109] Such mourning does not shy away from the horrors of trauma or the challenges of modernity. It gives voice to suffering, creating a space for stories to be told and listened to, a space in which pain is acknowledged. It is not a solitary work: Rose's speculative Hegelianism leads her always towards contextualisation, towards a consideration of the broad social, political and historical processes that have influenced present circumstances and towards a being-in-the-world that is embedded both in local community and in wider social structures. In Howard Caygill's words, 'such working through is not the achievement of an isolated "I" but is a communal effort which is expressed, for Rose, in culture and the institutions of state and civil society'.[110]

[108] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 74, emphasis in original.
[109] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 202.
[110] Caygill, 'The Broken Hegel', p. 23.

Communal working through involves the creation of spaces that encourage a critical remembering of what has gone before and the contestation of settled concepts. Dori Laub, cofounder of the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies at Yale University, has created one such space. Laub believes that knowing and being known are imperative if survivors are to have a life worth living:

> The survivors…needed to tell their stories in order to survive. There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to *tell* and thus come to *know* one's story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one's buried truth in order to be able to live one's life.[111]

Telling one's story enables one to know one's own story as well as to communicate it to others. Both dimensions of knowing are integral to inaugurated mourning and these must take place in community.

This *work* of mourning, be it the failings of modernity in general, or historically specific trauma, leads to the political. It is to an examination Rose's second response to trauma—the risk of engaging in political action—that I now turn.

Political risk

Traumatised individuals and communities are estranged from one another and from the wider socio-political context. Part of the process of working through is rediscovering agency, the ability to engage in political processes and to influence them in some way. Rose's critique of Benjamin is that he does not allow for a practical wrestling with the political, placing his hope in

[111] Dori Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', in Cathy Caruth (ed.) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1995), p. 63.

an eventual flash of redemption, what LaCapra terms ‘hope in a blank utopia’.[112] Rose’s inaugurated mourning has a clear political goal, however: to overcome the powerlessness and numbing associated with trauma, thus enabling reengagement with social and political life.

Reengaging politically is not easy, nor should it be. The experience of trauma, be it first hand or through bearing witness to another’s trauma and allowing oneself to become unsettled in the process, highlights the complexity of modern life, the struggle of ethical action in a damaged world. How should we think in such a world? How might we act? Rose speaks of the need to draw upon political and theological resources to negotiate the broken middle. She maintains that there is no easy path:

> If metaphysics is the *aporia*, the perception of the difficulty of the law, the difficult way, then ethics is the development of it, the *diaporia*, being at a loss yet exploring various routes, different ways towards the good enough justice, which recognises the intrinsic and the contingent limitations in its exercise. Earthly, human sadness is the divine comedy—the ineluctable discrepancy between our worthy intentions and the ever-surprising outcome of our actions. This comic condition is *euporia*: the always missing, yet prodigiously imaginable, easy way.[113]

The negotiation of the diremption of law and ethics involves a realisation of the difficulty of doing so alongside a refusal to give up working toward this ‘good enough justice’.[114]

Rose draws upon Jewish hermeneutics in her discussion of political risk, and in particular, on the concept of *Midrash*. *Midrash* is the traditional method of textual interpretation in Jewish biblical

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[112] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 152.
[113] Rose, *Love’s Work*, pp. 115-116.
[114] Note the similarities with Derrida’s account of the difficulties of pursuing justice in Derrida, ‘Force of Law’. Derrida maintains that no decision is fully just and that we must commit to exercising political judgement that involves wrestling with the undecidable in order to make an ‘impossible decision’ (p. 24).

hermeneutics.[115] Those who utilise it ‘recognize the fluid boundaries between text and interpretation, rather than the imperious unity of the primary text, and tend to emphasize conversation over objectivity and systematic uniformity in interpretation’.[116] The rabbinic community maintain that there is no whole truth wholly available in any text, and evince considerable tolerance for varying interpretations:

> [T]he continuity of Israel…derives from the paradoxical situation of the exegete’s submission to the oldest revelation at Sinai and yet freedom for new interpretation of the Divine Word through the strange midrashic conversation. This intertextual dialogue, conducted for thousands of years by multiple voices who understand one another as contemporaries, must also continually reformulate meanings relevant to the adjudication of current problems in Jewish life.[117]

The need for a continual reformulation of meaning is at the root of Rose’s insistence that any political action we risk must be reflected upon and revisited in the light of the present. It resonates with a Hegelian approach to thinking ethically: our understandings of knowledge and law must continually be renegotiated in the light of changing historical and political conditions.[118]

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[115] A rabbinic hermeneutical approach, with its respect for difference and advocacy for multivocality, has become an important methodology in contemporary literary theory, profoundly influencing such deconstructionists as Harold Bloom and Geoffrey Hartman. The re-emergence of *Midrash*, the discourse that has attracted the most scholarly attention, must be seen in part as an assertion of Jewish identity in the wake of the Holocaust, or *Shoah*. *Midrash* differs markedly from traditional Christian exegetical methods, which do not give as elevated a place to the interpretation of divine revelation. Although Christian scholars such as Augustine acknowledge the existence of ambiguities in biblical text, the biblical text is believed to portray a coherent message and there is little toleration for contradiction. Beth Sharon Ash, ‘Jewish Hermeneutics and Contemporary Theories of Textuality: Hartman, Bloom, and Derrida’, *Modern Philology*, Vol. 85, No. 1 (1987), p. 67.
[116] Ash, ‘Jewish Hermeneutics’, p. 65.
[117] Ash, ‘Jewish Hermeneutics’, p. 68.
[118] In practice, the meaning of legal guidelines is never fixed but is open to interpretation: see Jan Klabbers, ‘The Meaning of Rules’, *International Relations*, Vol. 20, No. 3 (2006), pp. 295-301. However, Rose is advocating a challenge to the meaning of rules that goes beyond legal wrangling by those authorised to define their meaning; she advocates a broader and deeper challenge.

Rose does not advocate the delineation of a positive or concrete programme of political action, emphasising the contingency of both theory and praxis.

> In both the world of politics and in the intellectual world, there seems to be a low tolerance of equivocation. The result of this intolerance and unease is the reproduction of dualistic ways of thinking and of formulating public policy… Wisdom, theoretical and practical, develops when the different outcomes of ideas and policies are related to the predicable modifications and to the unpredictable contingencies affecting their meaning and employment. Wisdom works with equivocation.[119]

Inaugurated mourning and political risk require deepening our understanding of the roles we play in the structures of power, both by our action and inaction. Our decisions (and indecision) will have consequences we do not anticipate; part of the work of mourning is to perceive more clearly our place in the wider community and to revise our actions and reactions in the light of this. Rose argues that we must 'redraw, *again and again*'[120] the boundaries that define the way we live: acknowledging the impossibility of perfect arrangements in a contingent and changing world, but refusing to give up the attempt to shape and reshape our responses in the communities in which we are embedded.

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[119] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, pp. 2-3

[120] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 122. The full quote states that the work of mourning involves: '[*coming*] *to learn* that will, action, reflection and passivity have consequences for others and for oneself which may not be anticipated and can never be completely anticipated; which *comes to learn* its unintended complicity in the use and abuse of power; and hence to redraw, *again and again*, the measures, the bonding and boundaries between me and me, subject and subjectivity, singular and individual, non-conscious and unconscious. This is *activity beyond activity*…The *work* of these experiences bears the meaning of meaning – the relinquishing *and taking up again* of activity which requires the fullest acknowledgement of active complicity' (emphasis in original).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have traced the development of Rose's thought from her early engagement with Adorno to her later writings on law and ethics. At the core of Rose's work is a speculative Hegelianism that guides her reflections on other thinkers and broad themes. Rose has a unique voice: her interpretation of Hegel is shared by few others;[121] she is critical of both liberal and poststructural thought; and she draws on widely divergent thinkers and ideas to produce notoriously difficult but profoundly insightful works.

Rose's Hegelianism is a form of speculative thought: she refuses to perceive the world in terms of irreconcilable binary opposites such as universal and particular, law and ethics, finite and infinite. Instead, she holds these ideas together in thought, aware of the ways in which the one mediates our understanding of the other. Part of the function of comprehensive thought is to facilitate a broader and deeper understanding of individuals and their place in the world, a deeper understanding of their *humanity*. Thus, Rose emphasises the necessity of understanding embedded in historical, social and political context, arguing against fixed and abstract guidelines that neglect the particular. Her thought struggles to negotiate particular pain whilst always striving towards the (constantly revised and revisable) universal; it learns from and mourns the past whilst working towards a different future; and it perceives the fragility of moral progress whilst continuing to take political risks in the hope of engendering positive outcomes. Rose

[121] Raymond Geuss is another thinker who emphasises the speculative account of Hegel's thought, as is Kimberly Hutchings, one of Rose's former students, and Rowan Williams. See Geuss, *Outside Ethics*; Hutchings, *Hegel and Feminist Philosophy*; Williams, 'Logic and Spirit in Hegel'.

maintains that approaching life with such a sensibility will inevitably involve struggle and failure; however, it also inspires hope and a deeper sense of community.

Rose's reflections on the brokenness of modernity are very much in the spirit of speculative Hegelianism. For Rose, this brokenness requires negotiation; it cannot be fixed by legal remedies (in the spirit of liberalism) nor should it be endlessly mourned (in the spirit of postmodernism). Instead, she posits a response of mourning and political risk to the disasters of modernity. The mourning she advocates is *inaugurated* mourning: an acknowledgment of the suffering and loss that we have experienced as individuals, as communities, and as bystanders, and a commitment to work through this loss. Inaugurated mourning involves both knowing and being known: it is communal as well as deeply personal and involves a deep awareness of the historical and social processes that have contributed to present pain.

Inaugurated mourning leads naturally to political action. *Contra* liberal prescription, Rose does not prescribe fixed guidelines based on unchanging truths, and *contra* post-modern despair, she does not focus exclusively on particularity, assuming that there is no room to apply what is learned in one situation to another. Instead, her Hegelian sensibility encourages comprehensive knowledge and a search for wholeness, thinking past and present, universal and particular, and potential and actuality at the same time. Engaging in political risk involves questioning closely-held assumptions about oneself, others, and current social and political arrangements, and daring to think and act differently in response. It involves a commitment to act, to evaluate the outcomes of one's action, and to act again, knowing that perfection can never be reached but refusing to give up the attempt to reach towards a good enough justice.

Rose's speculative Hegelianism falls 'outside ethics' in Raymond Geuss' formulation.[122] She posits a way of being in the world that has political effects; her purpose is not to formulate abstract guidelines for living or solutions with which to solve the problems of modernity, but to articulate a way in which we can approach the inevitable brokenness of the world around us. Underlying this is a different way of knowing, one that eschews both fixed truths and absolute contingency, forging a path which holds the pursuit of truth and an awareness of contingency together, negotiating a way of being that avoids the danger of falling into one or other opposition. It is a way of being that involves *work* and *struggle*, acknowledging that there is no easy path forward in a broken world. Alongside this, however, is a sense of the joy that can accompany the process of learning about oneself and others in the working through, and the richness that accompanies a life embedded in and supported by community.

[122] Indeed, Geuss proffers Hegel as an example of a thinker who breaks with the modern form of ethics, and instead puts forward an 'inherently nonindividualistic and inherently speculative, that is nonpractical, enterprise' (p. 46). He remarks that for Hegel, it does not make sense for the philosopher to speak in terms of 'ought'; 'if you want to know what to do in some particular situation, consult your local authorities, judge, policeman, rabbi, imam, or priest…it is not the philosopher's job to tell anyone what to do, resolve conflicts or dilemmas, or invent new ways of acting'. (p. 51). Geuss, *Outside Ethics*, pp. 46-52.

Chapter Five

Acting Out and Working Through: Trauma and the International

In the two preceding chapters, I drew on Adorno and Rose's works to suggest a different approach to suffering. Adorno insists that we attend to particular suffering, which tells us that things ought to be different, allowing concrete experiences of pain to illuminate and challenge broader social processes and institutional arrangements. He advocates a dialectic of *resistance*, which disturbs the *status quo* by determinedly preserving the non-identical: negative dialectics. Rose argues that traumatic experiences must be *worked through*, contrasting her notion of inaugurated mourning with Benjamin's call for melancholy repetition. She emphasises the notion of struggle as central to the work of mourning, saying that it is an extremely difficult process and that it requires both coming to know ourselves and the society in which we live. Her conception of mourning is political: it involves critical reflection on closely held assumptions about social and political structures, and encourages political action in response. She does not prescribe what form that action might take; instead, she advocates a different way of being in community, one that is self-reflective, critical, and politically engaged.

In this chapter, I argue that the category of trauma is often ignored in global politics, where the traditional focus on managing observable collective violence precludes consideration of its ‘hidden’ effects. Where trauma is taken seriously, it is often medicalised and its sufferers depoliticised; this shuts down critical reflection and preserves the *status quo*. However, I maintain that Rose’s notion of working through trauma provides an alternative response that takes the need to mourn past and present suffering seriously, whilst also insisting on the need to critically reflect on the social and political arrangements that facilitated that suffering. I apply Rose’s ideas to the experience of actual historical trauma (rather than structural or existential trauma) in order to elucidate further her approach to ethics and the political. I primarily examine trauma in the wake of violence because trauma is the ‘other’ of violence, the traditional focus of International Relations literature; however, Rose’s approach of working through is also relevant to less communal, more private examples of trauma.

Trauma, be it actual historical trauma or structural trauma, is a persistent feature of the past, present, and future of modernity. Nancy L. Rosenblum points to the web of violence that encircles modern society. Drawing on examples gleaned from the *New York Times* during a week in 1999, she argues:

> The wanton Taliban destruction, the torturous murder of Matthew Shepard,[1] and the terrifying school shootings are not isolated events. They are moments in cycles of hatred. Each is part of an identifiable social history or life history of conflict and revenge that does not end with the latest round. We see the cycle of hatred at work at

[1] Matthew Shepard was a gay student at the University of Wyoming, murdered in a brutal hate crime whereby his body was then publically displayed as a warning to others.

> every level…Crimes of hate have a past; sadly, they have a future, too, as each contributes to the climate of demonization and the desire for revenge.[2]

Responses to trauma differ both in theory and praxis. Liberal efforts to deal with violence rely heavily on legal remedies;[3] these are backed up by the state monopoly on violence, be it wielded by police or in the course of war waged to preserve security or to defend the liberal order. Within international security studies, there is an emphasis on securing and defending world order; however, the search for security looks to the future without placing events in their socio-historical context and does not deal with the past. Poststructural attempts to think about trauma tend towards the other extreme; they focus on the past, 'encircling' the trauma repeatedly and refusing to integrate it into a broader historical context for fear of domesticating or depoliticising the experience.[4] In this chapter, I examine political and communal responses to historical trauma and argue that Rose's notion of working through can be used to articulate a positive, balanced response to the horrors of modernity.

In applying Rose's thought to the experience of trauma, I draw upon her speculative, neo-Hegelian approach to ethics and the political. A speculative approach locates subjects within their actually existing social and political context and advocates a historical understanding of

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[2] Nancy L. Rosenblum, 'Introduction: Memory, Law, and Repair', in Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, with Nancy L. Rosenbaum (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), p. 3.

[3] See, for example, the range of legal remedies outlined in Nancy L. Rosenblum 'Justice and the experience of Injustice' in Martha Minow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred: Memory, Law, and Repair*, with Nancy L. Rosenbaum (ed.) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), pp. 77-106. Rosenblum details three collective legal responses to the call to 'do something' in the wake of violent atrocities: criminal prosecution, where individuals are held accountable for crimes against humanity in criminal trials; truth commissions, where those who have suffered and perpetrated political crimes testify publically and a public record of the tragedies is compiled; and reparations, where concrete restitution is made for what has been taken or lost.

[4] See Chapter Two of this thesis.

how the present conditions came to be. The possibility of transformation is embedded in a phenomenological understanding of the social and political conditions that underlie present existence. Hegel's search for comprehensive knowledge requires reaching beyond the easy path of thinking in terms of binary oppositions such as right and wrong, agent and structure, oppressed and oppressor, perpetrator and victim. It involves the negotiation of both concepts, acknowledging the ways in which they constitute one another, whilst also accepting that they are always already dirempted, and that this diremption can never be mended. Rose's call for mourning and political risk, then, is a call for more comprehensive *understanding* of the past and present first, aware that this understanding must always be partial, followed by the exercise of political judgement in the light of this understanding. To illustrate the application of Rose's thought to historical trauma, I draw on a number of empirical examples gleaned from academics and practitioners who write about trauma: these are drawn from history, literature, cultural studies, psychiatry, and peace studies.[5] These varied sources paint a coherent picture about the process of working through traumatic experiences: a process that is not visibly present in theoretical or empirical International Relations literature on violence and trauma.[6]

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[5] See, for example, Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*; Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*; Imre Kertész, *Fatelessness*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (London: The Harvill Press, 2005/1975); Rena Moses-Hrushovski with Rafael Moses, *Grief and Grievance: the Assassination of Yitzhak Rabin*, trans. Tim Wilkinson (London: Minerva Press, 2000); Siegfried Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston* (London: Faber and Faber, 1937/1972); Volkan, *Blood Lines*; Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Carolyn Yoder, *The Little Book of Trauma Healing: When Violence Strikes and Community Security is Threatened* (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005)

[6] Note that a discussion of trauma is beginning to find its way into the field of International Relations. See, for example, Duncan Bell, *Memory, Trauma and World Politics: Reflections on the Relationship between Past and Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2006); Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*; Fierke, 'Trauma, political solipsism and war'; and Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds'.

This chapter is divided into three sections. In section one, I examine trauma in general terms, noting its individual, social and political dimensions. In section two, I examine *acting out* in response to trauma, with a particular focus on the meaning-making narratives that individuals and groups adopt in order to make sense of their traumatic experiences: the heroic soldier, good and evil, and redemptive violence. In section three, I examine the notion of *working through* trauma. I argue that Rose's concepts of mourning and political risk are the key dimensions of a healthy, enabling working through, and that it is the 'mourning' dimension that is so often missing in critical discussions of agency and the political.[7] They allow an interplay between universal and particular, social and individual, by encouraging individuals and communities to mourn past and present suffering, but also to consider how things might be different and to take the risk of acting to challenge the *status quo*.

Trauma: Socio-Historical Reflections

Consideration of trauma and its ramifications has largely been ignored in the field of International Relations. This is in part because trauma is perceived as being experienced by individuals first and foremost, and as having little relevance at an international level. However, as we shall see, trauma also has social and political dimensions. Cathy Caruth describes trauma

[7] See, for example, Anthony Lang, *Agency and Ethics: The Politics of Military Intervention* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) and Brent J. Steele, *Ontological Security in International Relations* (London: Routledge, 2007). Both have interesting and nuanced discussions of agency: Lang from an Arendtian perspective and Steele drawing on Anthony Giddens's notion of intersubjectivity. However, neither author deals sufficiently with the notion of trauma as a problem for agency: when individuals are 'stuck' in defensive patterns of behaviour post-trauma, then this can shut them down from engaging politically, or else it can prompt them to acting in counter-shaming (often violent) ways.

as broadly encompassing 'an overwhelming experience of sudden or catastrophic events in which the response to the event occurs in the often delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena'.[8] She points to the paradoxical and unknowable nature of trauma, whereby an event is not assimilated at the time of its occurrence, but later returns to bear delayed and repeated witness to the wound.[9] *Not knowing* is an inherent element of trauma: the traumatic event is so overwhelming that it is not fully experienced in the moment and it is not until later that the enormity of what has happened begins to sink in. Trauma 'simultaneously defies and demands our witness'.[10] It defies our witness in that it is never able to be fully known or understood; memory does not and cannot record the event in full. Alongside this defiance, however, is a demand: the suffering that attends trauma cries out to be acknowledged and given voice.[11]

Trauma also affects larger social groups, particularly where individuals experience political violence or natural disasters. Kai Erikson's study of survivors of the Buffalo Creek disaster in the United States points to the social dimensions of trauma. He observes that trauma simultaneously creates and destroys community. Paradoxically, 'estrangement becomes the basis for communality'[12] as those marked by trauma seek out others who have had similar experiences and thus understand one another's numbness and pain. Erikson refers to this as a

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[8] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*.
[9] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 4.
[10] Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience*, p. 5.
[11] This aspect of trauma is captured well by Adorno who is torn between the insistence that we cannot express horrific events in words ('To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric') and that suffering must be expressed ('The need to lend a voice to suffering is a condition for all truth'). See Adorno, *Prisms*, p. 34; and Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 17-18.
[12] Kai Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma and Community', in Cathy Caruth (ed.), *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (Maryland: Johns Hopkins University, 1995), p. 186.

'gathering of the wounded'.[13] However, the overwhelming effect of trauma on a community is one of profound damage. The communality that brings survivors together is not a positive or therapeutic community; it is 'corrosive'.[14] Its members are united by a sense of being set apart from those who have not suffered, sharing a distinct set of perspectives as a result of their experiences. Erikson notes '[t]raumatized people calculate life's chances differently…they can be said to have experienced not only a *changed sense of self* and a *changed way of relating to others* but a changed *worldview*'.[15] They expect danger, feeling out of control and at the mercy of an uncertain world.

Trauma is not only experienced in the aftermath of single, dramatic events; it can also be ongoing and structurally induced as, for example, in the case of extreme poverty or ongoing civil war, where day-to-day life is a struggle for security and survival. Martha Cabrera, a psychologist who heads a team that works towards community reconstruction throughout Nicaragua, describes her country as 'a multiply wounded, multiply traumatized, multiply mourning country'.[16] This 'multiple wounds phenomenon' has consequences on a variety of levels: individual, social, and political. Another example of ongoing trauma is where unhealed trauma is passed down generationally; this can happen on a small scale, for example, where a parent has been sexually abused, or on a larger scale, such as in the aftermath of slavery or a civil war. Such trans-generational transmission of trauma can occur regardless of whether the next generation knows

[13] Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', p. 187.
[14] Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', p. 189.
[15] Erikson, 'Notes on Trauma', p. 194, emphasis in original.
[16] Martha Cabrera, 'Living and Surviving in a Multiply Wounded Country', http://wwwu.uni-klu.ac.at/hstockha/neu/html/cabreracruz.htm (last accessed 21 March, 2008).

of the trauma of the elder generation or not.[17] Other forms of trauma include secondary trauma, where people in a helping or observational role experience second-hand trauma because of what they see and hear, and participation-induced trauma, where the perpetrators of trauma suffer in the wake of harming others.[18]

Alongside the individual and social dimensions of trauma, be they experienced in the aftermath of a single event or more complex in causality, are disturbing political dimensions. Karin Fierke argues that we cannot isolate psychological and political considerations in the aftermath of war. She maintains that '[p]olitical trauma is larger than the sum of traumatised individuals in a context'[19] and as such it must be considered separately. She illustrates this with reference to the trauma that followed World War I. The shame and sense of betrayal that the German population felt in its aftermath and the widespread physical and psychological trauma due to the horrors of trench warfare and the loss of lives combined to produce political trauma. This was then manipulated by Hitler to create 'a solipsist Germany, ever vigilant in its relations to a dangerous external world and equally dangerous internal enemies'.[20] Psychological trauma and political humiliation brought into being a revenge-seeking political solipsism. As well as prompting 'acting out' behaviours, such as the pursuit of revenge, trauma can also prompt 'acting in' behaviours, such as political withdrawal. Cabrera points to the political consequences of trauma in multiply-wounded Nicaragua, where citizens are uninterested in political involvement:

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[17] Volkan, *Blood Lines*, pp. 43-44.
[18] Yoder, *Trauma Healing.*
[19] Fierke, 'Trauma, political solipsism and war', p. 482.
[20] Fierke, 'Trauma, political solipsism and war', p. 487.

> When a person does not or cannot work through a trauma right away, its social consequences, the most frequent of which are apathy, isolation and aggressiveness, are only revealed over time. We understood that there's a close connection between so many accumulated wounds and traumas and the behavior that can be seen today in the large number of Nicaraguans who insist they 'don't want to know any more about politics', or 'don't want to get involved in anything'. Unprocessed traumas and other wounds and grief explain much of the current lack of mobilization.[21]

Contrary to mainstream conceptions within International Relations, then, widespread trauma takes on a life of its own that is greater than individual suffering, and can profoundly influence the course of global politics. As such, approaches to global suffering that adopt a rational, forward-looking analysis can have only a limited understanding of violence and its fall out. In order to reach towards a deeper understanding of the cycles of violence and suffering, social and political analyses must also consider the emotional and psychological undercurrents operating in the lives of communities and the ways in which their histories influence their current realities.

In the remainder of this chapter, I examine responses to historical trauma, drawing on Dominick LaCapra's broad distinction between acting out and working through.[22] Acting out occurs where sufferers become 'stuck' in the past and live a restricted life characterised by hypervigilance and a desire for security. It is normal and adaptive in the immediate aftermath of trauma; however, prolonged acting out becomes pathological and prevents a healthy working through of trauma. This can be seen not only in individuals, but also in larger social groups. Working through is a much more difficult response to trauma; it does not paint the world in stark black and white or

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[21] Cabrera, 'Living and Surviving in a Multiply Wounded Country'.

[22] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. See also Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, for an accessible introduction to different responses to trauma. In this model, what LaCapra terms 'acting out' is referred to by Yoder as 'reenactment', encompassing both acting out, where trauma energy hurts others, and acting in, where trauma energy hurts oneself, for example, with anxiety and depression. LaCapra's notion of acting out encompasses both these maladaptive responses to trauma.

good and evil, as acting out tends to do, and it requires *work*. Rose's writings on mourning and political risk fall under the category of working through; they do not prescribe easy answers or a linear progression through pain, but instead involve self-examination, struggle, and critical engagement. I examine acting out and working through in turn.[23]

Responses to Trauma: Acting Out

Acting out involves a compulsive and repetitive re-living of the trauma; individuals who act out have difficulty distinguishing between the past and the present and struggle with notions of future. They are haunted by their experience and trapped in the past that wounded them.[24] This is unavoidable following trauma; however, in order for traumatised individuals to negotiate their way through the constriction that characterises their lives and to reengage with life in the here and now, they must begin to work through their traumatic experience. They must give voice to their trauma if they are to move beyond its most debilitating symptoms; these include hyper-arousal, where the traumatised individual lives in fight-or-flight mode; intrusion, where she experiences flashbacks and nightmares; and constriction, where she withdraws from normal social engagement, living a greatly restricted life.[25]

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[23] I draw on a variety of different literatures to illustrate acting out and working through: historical, medical, political theory, literature, and peace-building. There is a broad consensus on ideas about trauma—the effects of traumatic experiences on individuals and communities and the ways in which these change over time—across these literatures. My examples are chosen for illustrative purposes, and are necessarily a partial representation of a much broader range of possible examples that could have been included had I had more space.

[24] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma.*

[25] For a thorough delineation of the symptoms of trauma, see Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*.

Just as whole communities experience trauma, so too do whole communities fail to work through that trauma. People search desperately for meaning in the wake of disaster; this leads to the construction of 'meaning-making narratives'[26] in order to explain what happened and to bring comfort. Unfortunately, these narratives take refuge in simplistic explanations that both prolong existing suffering and beget further suffering. Three common narratives are the traditional heroic-soldier narrative, which allows only a truncated form of mourning that shuts down the questioning of self and other; the good versus evil narrative, which leads to a demonisation of the other; and the redemptive violence narrative, which prompts revenge-seeking behaviours. I examine these in turn.

Meaning-making narratives: the heroic-soldier

People often search for meaning in the losses they suffer in an attempt to attenuate the pain and bring comfort. Jay Winter examines the loss that attended World War I and its aftermath and how the vast number of those affected by the war dealt with their grief.[27] He notes that traditional forms of mourning dominated, forms that drew upon classical, romantic, and sacred sources. These forms allowed a search for meaning among the chaos and wreckage the war left in its wake. State-sponsored mourning encourages this search for meaning, particularly in the wake of war; it has a vested interest in its citizens accepting and supporting its armed engagements, despite the cost in lives. In his semi-autobiographical novel, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer*, Siegfried Sassoon remarks that during World War I the media colluded in this portrayal of war as heroic and glorious: 'somehow the newspaper men always kept the horrifying

[26] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 37.
[27] Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning*.

realities of the War out of their articles, for it was unpatriotic to be bitter, and the dead were assumed to be gloriously happy'.[28]

However, the mourning that the state encourages is generally a truncated form of working through that prioritises memorialisation. It allows very little room to tell one's story and does not encourage social re-engagement outside the orthodoxy. Edkins argues that the medicalisation and normalisation of traumatised individuals from armed forces results in depoliticisation and the preservation of the *status quo*. They are returned to service as soon as possible or, if they are unable to be reintegrated into the armed forces, they are labelled as suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. In both scenarios, individuals are discouraged from engaging politically.[29] Edkins maintains: 'In contemporary culture victimhood offers sympathy and pity in return for the surrender of any political voice'.[30] Vanessa Pupavac also warns against the depoliticisation of entire populations in the wake of conflict, arguing that labelling whole societies as traumatised can strip them of the right to govern themselves and legitimise 'indefinite international administration'.[31]

Meaning-making narratives: good and evil

A second meaning-making narrative that people employ to make sense of trauma is the narrative of right and wrong, good and evil. Individuals and societies perceive themselves as innocent

[28] Siegfried Sassoon, *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer,* in Sassoon*, The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*, p. 364.
[29] The phenomenon of 'labelling' resulting in loss of agency is also discussed in Karin Fierke, *Critical Security Studies* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007), p. 125. For a personal account of medicalisation and depoliticisation during WWI, see Sassoon's autobiographical novels, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*.
[30] Edkins, *Trauma and the Memory of Politics*, p. 9.
[31] Pupavac, 'Pathologizing Populations and Colonising Minds', pp. 489-511.

victims and the perpetrators as evil. In the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11, 2001, President George W. Bush immediately began to employ the rhetoric of good and evil. In the first speech he made in the wake of the attack, he announced: 'Today, our nation saw evil'. Peter Singer remarks: 'In his brief speech to the nation that evening, he used the word "evil" four times, setting the tone for the months and years to come'.[32]

The trauma in the wake of September 11 affected not only those individuals who suffered loss of family and friends; it affected whole communities and, indeed, the wider American public, many of whom perceived the attacks as being perpetrated on American values such as freedom and democracy. However, the mourning that took place was truncated prematurely: there was no official or media space for questioning, or for telling stories that did not mesh with the administration's chosen response to the attacks. The binary division of the world into good and evil does not allow for self-examination. In his reflections on the events and the aftermath of September 11, Žižek points to subtle media censorship in the days that followed:

> …when firefighters' widows were interviewed on CNN, most of them gave the expected performance: tears, prayers…all except one who, without a tear, said that she does not pray for her dead husband, because she knows that prayer will not bring him back. Asked if she dreams of revenge, she calmly said that that would have been a true betrayal of her husband: had he survived, he would have insisted that the worst thing to do is to succumb to the urge to retaliate…there is no need to add that this clip was shown only once, then disappeared from the repetitions of the same interviews.[33]

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[32] Singer, *The President of Good and Evil*, p. 143.
[33] Slavoj Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real! Five Essays on September 11 and Related Dates* (London: Verso, 2002), pp. 13-14, fn8.

This unacceptability of expressing alternative viewpoints, such as that expressed by the firefighter's widow, only intensified as the war on terror progressed.[34]

Judith Butler also discusses the rise of censorship in United States in the post-September 11 environment.[35] She notes that Bush's bald black-and-white statement—'Either you're with us or with the terrorists'—left no room for the rejection of both statements and meant that those who did not support the war were seen by the administration as terror sympathisers. Similarly vilifying of those who dared to question the war on terror was the (liberal Left) *New York Times*' labelling of those who sought a broader understanding of events as 'excuseniks'.[36] Butler argues that this was 'tantamount to the suppression of dissent' and that one can (and should) both condemn the violent attacks on September 11 and ask what the historical, social, and political antecedents were that facilitated the attack.[37] Žižek is similarly critical of the polarisation of rhetoric post-September 11. Those who unconditionally condemned the attacks were perceived as supporting a position of 'American innocence under attack by Third World Evil' and those who pointed to socio-political facilitators for Arab extremism were seen as labelling America as a deserving victim. Žižek maintains that we must resist the temptation of taking either position: 'The only possible solution here is to reject this very opposition and to adopt both positions

[34] Any questioning took place largely underground. Bush's assumptions created a clear political agenda that did not allow for official alternatives, but in civil society individuals and groups did begin to question the US administration's response. One such organisation is Peaceful Tomorrows, founded by people who lost family members in September 11, and who advocate non-violent alternatives to the Bush administration's response. See http://www.peacefultomorrows.org/index.php (last accessed 2 October 2007). See also Underground Zero, a collation of independent filmmakers' responses to September 11: http://www.jayrosenblattfilms.com/undergroundzero/ (last accessed 2 October 2007).

[35] Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), pp. 1-18.

[36] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 9.

[37] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 15.

simultaneously; this can be done only if we resort to the dialectical category of totality: there is no choice between those two positions; each is one-sided and false'.[38]

Meaning-making narratives: redemptive violence

The silencing of dissenting voices and a refusal to allow questioning truncates the mourning process. Caroline Yoder, director of Strategies for Trauma Awareness and Resilience (STAR), maintains that incomplete mourning at a societal level can lead not only to a feeling of victimhood but also to aggression:

> Regardless of the reasons for incomplete mourning, the resulting grief thwarts healing and keeps populations more susceptible to acting out of low-mode brain states. Normal fear can morph into panic and paranoia, pain into despair, anger into rage, humiliation and shame into an obsessive drive for vindication. The quest for measured justice can be confused with retaliation and revenge.[39]

Such aggression was certainly in evidence in the wake of the September 11 attacks. Bush made it perfectly clear that he would make no distinction between the perpetrators of terror and the nations that support and give refuge to terrorists, a doctrine he elaborated over the next weeks and followed with action when the United States began bombing Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Singer describes Bush's actions as 'the most aggressive choice among a range of options that had not been adequately explored...A peace-loving president would have been more convincing in trying all other options. That would have been emotionally and politically difficult in the days immediately following September 11, but it was what Bush ought to have done'.[40]

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[38] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real!*, pp. 49-50
[39] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, pp. 36-37.
[40] Singer, *The President of Good and Evil*, p. 152-3.

Meaning-making narratives are not only deployed in the wake of single traumatic events, such as September 11, they are also employed in situations of ongoing trauma. In her reflections on grief and grievance in the wake of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination, Israeli psychoanalyst Rena Moses-Hrushovski examines the ongoing Israeli-Palestine conflict and the complex trauma that so many suffer as a result. In a situation of ongoing trauma, each new loss triggers past losses and old wounds are reopened. In the case of Rabin's assassination in 1995, the murder of a man who had given his life to work for peace and freedom from terror served to reinforce the deeply held belief that Israel could not trust anyone, that justice was unachievable, that the unthinkable had happened once again.[41] Moses-Hrushovski uses the term 'deployment' to describe the recurring attitudes and patterns of behaviour exhibited by her multiply-traumatised patients, and argues that such patterns are also exhibited on a broader social scale in the Arab-Israeli conflict. She summarises the characteristics of deployed individuals and groups as follows:

> deployment entails a rigid self-organisation into a system of attitudes, roles and behaviours aimed at protecting one's self-esteem and dignity, at consoling or compensating oneself for what one has experienced in the past as unfair, painful, and humiliating; and, [*sic*] all this rather than deal with the hardships involved, mourn the losses and disappointments experienced and adopt adaptive and self-realising patterns.[42]

One of the 'adaptive patterns' that those embedded in the Israeli-Palestine conflict employ is that of violence: 'hatred and accusation'[43] were soon substituted for mourning after Rabin's assassination. In the ensuing months, the people of Israel elected a Likud government that opposed peace, and clashes with the Palestinian police soon followed.[44] Although there was

[41] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 12.
[42] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 44.
[43] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 115.
[44] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 163.

partial mourning after Rabin's assassination, it was truncated prematurely. Moses-Hrushovski believes that this was in part due to Shimon Peres's decision to bring the Israeli elections forward and to refrain from capitalising on the assassination in the Labour Party campaign: this 'cut off the expression of grieving and mourning'.[45] Another contribution to the premature end of the mourning process was the defensive reaction by Orthodox and right groups in response to the hurling of accusations by those non-religious and left groups. She explains:

> Their guilt—and indeed the guilt of Israelis from all parts of the political spectrum—for having contributed to, or having done nothing to prevent the outrageous libels hurled against Yitzhak Rabin caused many Israelis to forget, repress or at least not think enough about the tragic event itself. Hatred and accusation took the place of real mourning, which would have had to involve the examining of the problems surrounding the murder, the admission of direct or indirect responsibility for what had happened and the commitment to deal courageously with lessons learned from the tragedy.[46]

The uncomfortable suspicion that they were somehow complicit in Rabin's assassination was repressed; rather than engage in critical self-reflection, many Israelis took refuge in the less disruptive (to their own sense of self) strategy of finger-pointing and hatred. This, combined with a rapid switch of focus in the build-up to a new election, truncated the process of mourning and working through.

One of the dangers of prolonged acting out after traumatic events is that a failure to work though the traumatic experience often perpetuates further violence. This happens not only in the immediate aftermath of trauma, but also decades and even generations later. Vamik Volkan argues that the trans-generational transmission of trauma plays a significant role in violent

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[45] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 113.
[46] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 115.

conflict. He notes that a refusal to mourn a twelfth-century defeat kept a sense of victimhood alive in the Serbian community that was later mobilised by Slobodan Milosevic in the Bosnia-Herzegovina conflict: 'The "defeat" of June 28, 1389, became the shared loss that could not be mourned but that had to be recalled continually...The Serbs held on to their victimized identity and glorified victimization in song'.[47] Volkan describes such traumas as 'chosen trauma': 'Adopting a chosen trauma can enhance ethnic pride, reinforce a sense of victimization, and even spur a group to avenge its ancestors' hurts'.[48] If we are to arrest such cycles of violence and aggression, we must learn how to *work through* trauma. It is to a consideration of working through that I now turn.

Responses to Trauma: Working Through

Imre Kertész, in his (semi-autobiographical) narrative about a young boy who survived the Nazi camps in World War II, recounts an extraordinary conversation between the young boy and his family once he returns home.

> 'Before all else', [the old boy] declared, 'you must put the horrors behind you'. Increasingly amazed, I asked, 'Why should I?' 'In order', he replied, 'to be able to live'…'one cannot start a new life under such a burden', and I had to admit he did have a point. Except I didn't quite understand how they could wish for something that was quite impossible, and indeed I made the comment that what had happened had happened, and anyway, when it came down to it, I could not give orders to my memory.

[47] Volkan, *Blood Lines*, p. 64.

[48] Volkan, *Blood Lines*, p. 78. See also his chapter in the same book entitled 'Chosen Trauma: Unresolved Mourning', pp. 36-49, and Fierke's analysis of acting out in Germany post-World War I and its facilitation of the horrors that ensued in World War II in 'Trauma, Political Solipsism and War'.

> I would only be able to start a new life, I ventured, if I were to be reborn or if some affliction, disease, or something of the sort were to affect my mind, which they surely didn't wish on me, I hoped.[49]

The narrator is astonished at the obtuseness of his family in their pragmatic insistence that he must put his experiences in Auschwitz behind him and look to the future. He could not just take off his experiences and dispose of them like he did his prison garb; they were a part of him. He would only be able to move forward by taking 'steps'; he could neither start a new life with a blank slate, nor continue his previous existence as if nothing had changed. He needed to work through his experiences, to attempt to make sense of what had happened: 'I now needed to start doing something with that fate, needed to connect it to somewhere or something…'[50] This process of 'doing something' with the experiences of suffering is the process of working through, a process the narrator begins by trying to describe his experiences in the camps to his family. LaCapra describes working through as an 'articulatory practice' that gradually enables one to make distinctions between past, present, and future. It is not a linear process, nor can binary distinctions be made between acting out and working through; on the contrary, the process of working through is complex and is never tidily resolved:

> [Working through] requires going back to problems, working them over, and perhaps transforming the understanding of them. Even when they are worked through, this does not mean that they may not recur and require renewed and perhaps changed ways of working through them again. In this sense, working through is itself a process that may never entirely transcend acting out and that, even in the best of circumstances, is never achieved once and for all.[51]

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[49] Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 256.
[50] Kertész, *Fatelessness*, p. 259.
[51] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, pp. 148-149.

Working through is rarely discussed in International Relations literature, critical or otherwise. There is a call for a return of the political, and for thinking in terms of agency;[52] however, before one can engage politically, one often needs to work through trauma in order to move away from a reliance on damaging meaning-making narratives and acting out behaviours. Rose's call for mourning and political risk crucially calls for mourning before and alongside agency. She points to the political dangers of unmourned loss:

> [The] impotence and suffering arising from unmourned loss do not lead to a passion for objectivity and justice. They lead to resentment, hatred, inability to trust, and then, the doubled burden of fear of those negative emotions…It is the abused who become the abusers, whether politically as well as psychically may depend on contingencies of social and political history.[53]

Unless trauma is worked through, it is likely to beget further pain and suffering that could well have political consequences—be it hatred expressed in further violence or political disengagement. LaCapra argues that unless individuals mourn, they will not be able to reengage with life, particularly not with its political or social dimensions:

> Mourning involves a different inflection of performativity: a relation to the past which involves remembering and taking leave of or actively forgetting it, thereby allowing for critical judgment and a reinvestment in life, notably social and civic life with its demands, responsibilities, and norms requiring respectful recognition and consideration for others. By contrast, to the extent someone is possessed by the past and acting out a repetition compulsion, he or she may be incapable of ethically responsible behavior.[54]

Individuals who have undergone extreme suffering have broken through to the 'real', in Žižek's terms; they have experienced the horrific underside of existing social and political arrangements

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[52] See, for example, Lang, *Agency and Ethics*; Steele, *Ontological Security*.
[53] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 51.
[54] LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, p. 70.

and are in a unique position to enlighten Enlightenment, to challenge the *status quo*. Part of mourning is this relating of particular suffering to broader social forces. But what does this mourning look like? What kinds of political risk should we take? How can we work through our losses in the real world?

As discussed in the previous chapter, Rose maintains that inaugurated mourning is 'the ability to know and be known'.[55] The form of knowledge to which Rose refers is a Hegelian comprehensive knowledge: 'knowledge of what is opposed in its very oneness…the knowledge that the opposites are in truth one'.[56] It is a knowledge that holds together different perspectives and different experiences and examines their relation, rather than separating them into closed spheres. To mourn is to express one's own grief and to be heard; it is also to listen to others' grief. It refuses to perceive the world in terms of sharply defined spheres of good and evil, whilst also refusing relativism. It evinces a deep awareness of the social and political conditions of the present and the historical antecedents that shaped them. It looks beyond the discourses of freedom and rights and perceives the underlying structures of power and domination. It exercises political judgment, doing so with an awareness of contingency and the inevitable limitations of any outcome. It *struggles* towards a 'good enough justice'[57]—knowing that any justice will always be imperfect and that we will never be able to '[mend] diremption in heaven or on earth'.[58] It imagines the possibility of ethical life, and takes ethical initiative, but always assesses the outcomes and revises law and institutions in response.

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[55] Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, p. 202.
[56] Hegel, *The Letters*, pp. 280-282, cited in Rose, *Judaism and Modernity*, pp. 60-61.
[57] Rose, *Love's Work*, p. 116.
[58] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xv.

In what follows, I examine Rose's notions of mourning and political risk in turn, suggesting ways in which these ideas have been and can be applied in actual historical situations. Mourning takes many different forms and is expressed differently by peoples from different cultures.[59] However, the process of working through grief entails three broad tasks: expressing grief, reconstructing events and history in narrative form, and critical judgment. These in turn prepare people for political engagement. I examine these tasks in turn; however, it is important to note that the process of working through is non-linear and that the tasks overlap in practice.[60]

Mourning: (creative) expression

Part of mourning is expressing grief at the pain and loss that one has suffered. This can be enormously difficult for traumatised individuals and groups; part of the experience of trauma is that one's feelings become difficult to access: individuals feel wooden and severed from reality. In particular, it can be difficult to use words to express feelings. At this early stage of mourning, creative, often non-verbal, expression can be helpful. Yoder points to a variety of modes that may help to express grief in the wake of trauma, including: 'art, music, dance, drama, writing,

[59] To illustrate, Jayne Docherty, one of Yoder's STAR colleagues, notes how much more relaxed a man from Uganda was than the other participants in one of the workshops she was running. When she asked him about it, he replied that one of the methods his people used to mourn was dancing, and that he utilised the technique to help him process his grief and cope with stress. (Personal communication, International Studies Association Annual Convention, Chicago, February 2007.) For a discussion on the problematic application of Western psychotherapeutic notions of healing to other cultures, and particularly in relation to the truth and reconciliation commissions, see Rosalind Shaw, 'Rethinking Truth and Reconciliation Commissions: Lessons from Sierra Leone', *United States Institute of Peace Special Report 130*, 2005, http://www.usip.org/pubs/specialreports/sr130.pdf (last accessed February 14, 2008).

[60] Before the broad stages of working through I have outlined can take place, some degree of safety should ideally be established. However, this is not always possible, for example in situations of ongoing conflict. For an excellent chapter dealing with the establishment of safety in personal recovery, see Herman, 'Trauma and Recovery', pp. 155-174.

prayer, meditation, cultural rituals, and cleansing ceremonies'.[61] Body-work such as movement and dance can also be helpful.

The Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma uses the healing power of the arts to help refugees work through trauma. Richard Mollica, director of the programme, maintains that artistic beauty can help people come to terms with pain: 'The embrace of beauty by the survivor and healer restores a sense of inter-connectedness, well-being and meaning'.[62] He argues that one aspect of the violence perpetrated against refugees has been the destruction of beauty and culture and that part of the process of recovery is reconnecting with that which was lost. Trauma survivors can access and express their experiences by rediscovering the artistic expressions of their culture: expressing pain through drawing and painting, and telling stories through drama and puppets.[63] In the wake of Rabin's death, various forms of creative expression played a part in Israeli society's working through. The square in which he was assassinated became a 'temple of art': masses gathered there to light candles, sing songs, write notes, and weep.[64] Music became a focal point for the nation's grief, with the communal singing of songs such as the 'Song of Peace' and the moving performance of Shlomo Gronich at the memorial service that closed the seven days of mourning.[65]

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[61] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 54.
[62] Richard Mollica, 'Why Stories?', *Harvard Program on Refugee Trauma*, http://www.hprt-cambridge.org/Layer3.asp?page_id=25, accessed April 24, 2007. See also Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*.
[63] The HPRT website has various examples of art as a healing tool, including a comic book about a Cambodian brother and sister who survived the Khmer regime: Svang Tor and Richard Mollica, 'Sun and Moon: A Khmer Journey', downloadable from http://www.hprt-cambridge.org/Layer3.asp?page_id=28, accessed April 24, 2007.
[64] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 8, 18.
[65] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 19.

Expressing pain and loss in the wake of traumatic experience is an important part of working through; it is also difficult. Creative expression, both alone and in concert with others, can help individuals and communities begin to explore the impact of that loss and to make connections between the aspects of themselves (emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual) that are often fractured following extreme suffering. It also prepares the way for a narrative reconstruction of what has happened; a reconstruction that should be communicated to those who did not experience the trauma(s) in order to facilitate reflection on accepted social practices.

Mourning: narration

Telling the story of a trauma is central to the mourning process. Psychiatrist Judith Lewis Herman describes story-telling as a 'work of reconstruction' that transforms the traumatic memory and enables it to be incorporated into the traumatised individual's life story.[66] Yoder maintains that story-telling helps with the healing process because it 'counteracts the isolation, silence, fear, shame, or "unspeakable" horror'.[67] However it is also difficult; it is a part of the *work* of mourning that requires communication with those who (often) do not want to hear.

The story-telling process is communal: without an audience, be it one person or many, it loses much of its power. As discussed in the previous chapter, Laub's work with the Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies points to the double value of survivor testimony: it helps individuals not only to know themselves, but to be known by others.[68] These two aspects of testimony—knowing and being known—comprise Rose's notion of inaugurated mourning. In his writings

[66] Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, p. 175.
[67] Yoder, *Trauma Healing*, p. 53.
[68] Laub, 'Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle', p. 63.

on Holocaust survivor testimony, Michael Nutkiewicz argues that oral testimony is 'communal, didactic, and therapeutic' and that it is precisely because it is not privatised but made public that it is able to be all these things.[69] He argues that survivors can and should speak of the horrors they have witnessed, both for the sake of the survivor and for the wider community. Indeed, the element of public testimony has become an integral part of some programmes designed to help victims work through their trauma. Nutkiewicz tells of the founding in 1995 of the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry and Witnessing, saying that it was established 'because traditional psycho-pathological approaches were obviously not getting at the heart of the victim's trauma. The missing element was narrative—allowing the survivors to tell their story in the context of public retelling'.[70] Martha Minnow also points to the therapeutic element of public testimony. She maintains that the 'power of testimony' was demonstrated over and over in South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). She quotes Lucas Baba Sikwepere, who was blinded by a policeman during the apartheid era, and who testified at the TRC: 'I feel what has been making me sick all the time is the fact that I couldn't tell my story. But now I—it feels like I got my sight back by coming here and telling you the story'.[71] This illustrates the facilitation of individual working through by public story-telling.

What should a trauma story communicate in order to promote working through? Drawing on his work with refugees, Mollica argues that for a trauma story to aid recovery and healing, it should

[69] Michael Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish in Holocaust Survivor Testimony', *The Oral History Review,* Vol. 30, No. 1 (2003), p. 17.

[70] Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish', pp. 18-19. For details of the Project on Genocide, Psychiatry and Witnessing, see http://www.psych.uic.edu/research/genocide/index.htm, last accessed Wednesday, September 12, 2007.

[71] Testimony before Human Rights Committee of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, quoted in Minnow, *Breaking the Cycles of Hatred*, p. 25.

comprise four elements.[72] First, the story recounts factually what happened, communicating the series of events that triggered their trauma. Second, the story communicates broader socio-cultural elements, portraying the history, traditions, and values that underlie the narrative. Individuals from different cultures will place varying meanings on events, and different responses may be necessary for working through.[73] Third, the story involves 'looking behind the curtain' of daily life and reflecting on the deeper (personal and societal) implications of their suffering. This may involve rejecting beliefs once held to be true, such as traditional views on sexuality in the wake of sexual abuse, or belief in the infallibility of political leaders. Lastly, the trauma story involves building a relationship with a listener—public testimony is healing not only for those who share their stories, but also for those who listen. Storytelling is a reciprocal relationship: the listener values the person who is sharing their story and this influences both lives. One of the major goals and effects of mourning loss is that it reduces the sense of isolation, of being alone with one's shame and terror, and facilitates social reintegration. Mollica warns against a focus on the facts of traumatic experiences to the exclusion of a relationship between the storyteller and society. He argues that society needs to listen to trauma survivors, saying they have much to teach us about survival and recovery. He insists that it is a 'public responsibility' to listen and learn:

> The trauma survivor reminds us all of our own vulnerability to tragedy and of the potential for society to abandon us. We know that society's neglect can have a greater impact on the fate of the trauma survivor than the violent injury itself. But another way

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[72] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 34-48.

[73] For example, Mollica tells of the Khmer Rouge practice of forbidding proper burials and Buddhist ceremonies for their victims. He notes that an important part of working through for those who lost loved ones in this way is to conduct a traditional ceremony that remembers those who have died. See Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, pp. 41-42.

> is possible, as the story of victimization becomes a story of courage and the story of damage becomes a story of recovery.[74]

Although listening to others' pain is an uncomfortable process, it is irresponsible to avoid doing so. Those who have suffered beyond what many of us can imagine should not be ignored or swept aside, but listened to and learnt from.

Storytelling can take place in public speech and in written (historical or literary) form: the public has a responsibility to listen and to consider institutional and legal arrangements in the light of these narratives. Mari J. Matsuda argues from a legal perspective that the public needs to hear the stories of those who experience racism, hate and violence in order to challenge existing laws and precedents that fail to address these problems. She notes that a typical legal inquiry omits 'the particularity of a victim's time and space as well as the experience of a victim's group over the course of time and space'.[75] She advocates instead a 'deep historical consciousness' in order to 'lift us out of the neutrality trap'.[76] Public reception of people's trauma stories prompts reflection and can bring about legal response. Speaking to a legal audience on the matter of racist speech, Matsuda offers a challenge: 'before we abandon the task of devising a legal response to racist speech, we should consider concretely the options available to us. The legal imagination is a fruitful one'.[77] This echoes in concrete historical context what Rose calls for in theory: an openness to challenge and revise laws in response to limitations.

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[74] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, p. 247.
[75] Mari J. Matsuda, 'Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim's Story', *Michigan Law Review*, Vol. 87, No. 8 (1989), p. 2373.
[76] Matsuda, 'Public Response to Racist Speech', pp. 2320-2381.
[77] Matsuda, 'Public Response to Racist Speech', p. 2380.

Alongside public spoken testimony, there is a place for historical writing in coming to terms with historical trauma. LaCapra suggests that a nuanced account of the traumatic event(s) may help to counter melancholy and promote working through. Such writing exposes both the writer and reader to *empathic unsettlement* that encourages practical ethical response while remaining open to utopian ideals and hope.[78] This need not be done by an outsider, who pieces together events and antecedents after the fact; some of the most powerful historical writings have been literary accounts by those who experienced the horrors of war. Sassoon's semi-autobiographical trilogy of an officer during World War I describes the frustration that attended attempts to describe the torment of war to those who had not experienced it and did not want to hear. His poetry and the trilogy were a way of engaging politically and working through his own pain by putting it in narrative form as well as a way of eliciting a response from others.[79] Similarly, Imre Kertész's *Fatelessness* is a powerful fictionalised account of his own experiences in a series of Nazi concentration camps including Auschwitz during World War II: a searingly personal and provocative account that profoundly unsettles.[80] Listening to others' pain challenges our own firmly held preconceptions about the way the world works, it points to the limitations of current political and social systems, and it indicates the lack of an easy way. However, it also points to hope: a fragile, painful hope, but a hope nonetheless. Those who have suffered have survived and have much to teach us; although our learning will inevitably be partial and fragile, we must take the risk of listening and responding.

[78] LaCapra, p. 42.
[79] Sassoon, *The Complete Memoirs of George Sherston*.
[80] Kertész, *Fatelessness*.

Mourning: critical judgement

A third interrelated aspect of mourning loss in the wake of trauma is critical reflection on the 'objective conditions'[81] that allowed the suffering to take place. Adorno's dialectical approach analyses the ways in which concrete suffering illuminates broader social conditions. He argues that pain tells us that things ought to be different, and that we have a responsibility to bear witness to the repression of modern society: to enlighten Enlightenment.

Moses-Hrushovski terms this aspect of mourning 'soul-searching': challenging accepted practices and modes of being that may have facilitated the suffering.[82] She notes that self-examination often gives way to other-examination and to pointing a finger of blame, but that soul-searching must take place both within groups and also between groups if understanding of the 'whys' of extreme suffering is to grow. In her examination of Israeli society and the social and political antecedents of the violence of Rabin's assassination, Moses-Hrushovski points to three facilitating aspects of Israeli culture: male chauvinism, which leads to violence on the roads and in homes; ethnically-related grievances of Jewish immigrants, who have failed to be integrated into Israeli society and who experience systematic discrimination; and political deployment, where a focus on past traumas precludes consideration of the future.[83] Reflection and insight into those practices that facilitate violence and trauma is crucial; with enhanced understanding, we may be able to challenge the damaging knee-jerk reactions that perpetuate the cycle of violence.

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[81] Adorno, 'What Does Coming to Terms with the Past Mean?', p. 124.
[82] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 36-43.
[83] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 67-91.

Butler also speaks provocatively of the need for political reflection in the wake of injury. She argues that '[t]o be injured means that one has the chance to reflect upon injury, to find out the mechanisms of its distribution, to find out who else suffers from permeable borders, unexpected violence, dispossession, and fear, and in what ways'.[84] She maintains that in the wake of violence, we should ask the following questions:

> What role will we assume in the historical relay of violence, who will we become in the response, and will we be furthering or impeding violence by virtue of the response that we make? To respond to violence with violence may well be 'justified', but is it finally a responsible solution? Similarly, moralistic denunciation provides immediate gratification, and even has the effect of temporarily cleansing the speaker of all proximity to guilt through the act of self-righteous denunciation itself. But is this the same as responsibility, understood as taking stock of our world, and participating in its social transformation in such a way that non-violent, cooperative, egalitarian international relations remain the guiding ideal?[85]

Responding to violence with an emphatic denunciation of the perpetrators and a promise that they will be punished has popular appeal; large sectors of the public demand strong leadership and clearly defined boundaries between right and wrong. However, it is irresponsible to react primarily on the basis of political expediency; it only perpetuates the cycle of violence and serves to feed security fears. Space must be made for the expression of mourning and anger, but also for reflection and self-awareness. Grief and anger, no matter how great or how justified, must never drown out public debate and criticism.

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[84] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. xii.
[85] Butler, *Precarious Life*, p. 17.

Political risk

Alongside mourning, in all its dimensions, Rose also advocates engaging in political risk as part of the process of working through. Much of what I have discussed as being part of the process of mourning is also political risk; the process of working through is non-linear and it is impossible to make clear distinctions between mourning and political engagement. The process of telling one's story, particularly if this is done in a public way, is engaging in political risk. So, too, is the process of listening to others' trauma stories.[86] The critical assessment of one's own closely held assumptions, the questioning of one's own and larger group actions, and engaging in dialogue with the 'other' are also courageous political acts.

Rose's notion of political risk has a speculative Hegelian negotiation of the particular and the universal at its core. She speaks of the need to 'act, *without guarantees*, for the good of all—this is to take *the risk* of the *universal* interest'.[87] Taking the risk of the universal requires listening to particular pain and suffering and reflecting upon what these might mean more generally for institutions and law. In this sense, it implies a radical democracy where groups of people challenge settled norms at various levels: sub-state, state, and supra-state. It requires giving voice to those who are dispossessed and ignored within current systems of power. It challenges tidy liberal categories and forces rethinking rather than blind acceptance of what has gone before. It does not throw out existing laws and institutions; it works both within and without

[86] See, for example, Nutkiewicz, 'Shame, Guilt, and Anguish' on the issue of the risk involved in telling one's trauma story and the risk in listening to the story.
[87] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 62, emphasis in original.

these existing structures to hold them accountable to those ideals they profess to uphold and to advocate change where they marginalise and discriminate.

Bonnie Honig proffers a radical account of democratic agency with Rose-ian political risk at its core. Drawing on Freud's depiction of Moses as the foreign founder of Israel in *Moses and Monotheism*, she sketches a model of agency where democratic subjects are always sceptical of their leaders and institutions. For Honig, radically democratic subjects who engage in political risk are:

> subjects who do not expect power to be granted to them by nice authorities with their best interests at heart; subjects who know that if they want power they must take it and that such taking is always illegitimate from the perspective of the order in place at the time; subjects who know that their efforts to carve out a just and legitimate polity will always be haunted by the violences of their founding; subjects who experience the law as a horizon of promise but also as an alien and impositional thing.[88]

These subjects live in an agonistic relationship with their law, institutions, and leaders. They see glimpses of promise in the law but do not expect that it is perfect or complete or that it will be wielded wisely by those who adjudicate it. These subjects are also ready to *act*, to engage in political risk, knowing that any action will have imperfect results and that no system will ever be complete. These subjects do not expect to 'mend diremption in heaven and on earth',[89] nor do they indulge in an endless melancholy. Instead, they 'nurture some ambivalence regarding their principles, their leaders, and their neighbors and…put that ambivalence to good political use'.[90]

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[88] Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 39.
[89] Rose, *The Broken Middle*, p. xv.
[90] Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner,* p. 118.

Conclusion

Reflection in international ethics is prompted by the persistence of violence and suffering in global politics and by a desire to 'do something' in response. However, the response that is articulated by liberal approaches to global suffering skims too quickly over past and present pain in an attempt to sketch a better future, one in which respect for human rights and the rule of law prevails. In liberal international ethics, guidelines for living are determined by what is deemed to be best for all; in critical Habermasian theory, guidelines are devised in rational discourse between affected individuals. These imagine an ideal world, in which morality progresses apace and rationality reigns. However, such a world has no space for the messiness of actual living with its complicated histories, its difficult present, and its complex emotions. The pervasiveness of violence in the modern world—be it in the context of civil war or in the home—cannot be legislated away, nor can its effects be discounted. We must look suffering full in the face, we must sit with stories that make us uncomfortable, and we must allow our tidy assumptions about how the world is and should be to be turned upside down.

In this chapter, I have examined the liberal response to trauma in the wake of collective violence, and argued that elites and societies take refuge in meaning-making narratives to make sense of their pain. These narratives—the heroic soldier, good and evil, and redemptive violence—allow those whose worlds are disrupted to find comfort in simple formulas, formulas that do not

require *work* or challenge deeply held presuppositions about the world. In LaCapra's terminology, such responses to trauma fall under the rubric of acting out. More difficult, but less damaging, are responses that fall under the rubric of working through trauma. Rose's politics of mourning and political risk require individuals and communities to work through the trauma that is so pervasive in modernity. She warns of the political consequences of failing to do so, noting that those who suffer can go on to inflict suffering if wounds are allowed (or, indeed, encouraged) to fester. Adorno insists that suffering must be given voice; we who profess concern for victims of war and violence have a responsibility to provide fora for such testimony, to listen and mourn alongside those who suffer, and to critically examine and challenge the objective societal conditions that facilitate the suffering.

To engage in political risk is not an easy path. It involves slow steps, painful questioning, and inevitable failure. But the alternative is an alternative of easy answers and glib responses that does nothing to address the underlying structures that perpetuate violence and suffering. Before his death, Rabin spoke of 'taking calculated risks'[91] to pursue peace:

> A century of hatred doesn't dissolve suddenly with a handshake in Washington. Peace will be built slowly, day by day, through modest deeds and countless spontaneous details…We are going slowly and cautiously, one step at a time…Extremists on both sides are lying in wait for us, and we Israelis and Palestinians must not fail. At every step we must consider and weigh, check – and beware.[92]

Rabin lived a life of political risk, risk that eventually cost him his life. It takes courage to work through trauma, to take the difficult path of mourning and political risk. It is not a popular path;

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[91] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 24.

[92] Yitzhak Rabin, 'Article Adapted from Prime Minister Rabin's Address in Paris on Receiving the UNESCO Peace Prize' (1994), cited in Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 27.

it is disturbing and unsettling. It is unlikely to be embraced by many elites or decision-makers; it must be walked by courageous groups and individuals who are willing to go against settled norms and to advocate a different way of thinking and being. It requires reflection on the societal and historical antecedents of suffering, but knows that these insights will rarely be welcomed by those in power. It challenges the structures that perpetuate inequality and exclusion, but realises that any progress will be fragile and reversible. It knows that the deep brokenness that attends modern life can never be fully mended, but clings to the promise of a measure of healing, despite this.

Chapter Six

Conclusion

A major premise of this thesis is that although ethical reflection in mainstream international political thought is prompted by human suffering, it too quickly shifts attention from past and present suffering to the articulation of rational, forward-looking solutions. Established critical approaches have attempted to redress this lack, rejecting the technical solutions offered by liberalism and proposing either dialogic (Habermasian) or deconstructive (poststructural) approaches instead. However, Habermasian theorists inherit dubious distinctions from modern political thought, privileging the universal over the particular, public over private, consensus over dissensus, and rational argumentation over acknowledgement and recognition. Poststructural theorists disturb these accepted hierarchies, offering a powerful social critique; however, they tend to emphasise the previously neglected side of the binary opposition, privileging particular and private categories over universal and public, and favouring fragmentation over unity. Both sets of critical theories, then, offer limited accounts of suffering under modernity, and the power of their critique is compromised as a result. I argue that a fuller account of suffering in global politics can be gleaned from theory in the tradition of the early Frankfurt School, drawing on Adorno and Rose to articulate an approach that allows the negotiation of binary opposites without purporting to mend the diremption between law and

ethics, universal and particular. Theory in this tradition has a speculative Hegelian core, which maintains that it is impossible to think a particular without also thinking about its relation to what it is not. Instead, there is a mutual constitution of opposites, whereby reflection on one illuminates the other and increases our comprehension of the whole, despite its brokenness.

I have chosen the term 'speculative' to describe the approach I develop in the second part of this thesis for several reasons. Both Adorno and Rose draw heavily on a reading of Hegel that points to his speculative dialectics as a way of negotiating the broken middle between universal and particular, law and ethics, Enlightenment ideals and lived experience. Speculative thought points to the particular, but maintains that the particular cannot be thought in isolation:

> To think a particular is to think 'this, not that; here, not there; now, not then': to map it on to a conceptual surface by way of exclusions or negations, yet in that act to affirm also its relatedness, its involvement; from empty identity, thinkable only as a kind of absence and indeterminacy, to the specific position, this not that, and by way of that 'contradictory' state to arrive at thinking the 'individual' as a convergence of the universal and the particular.[1]

To reflect on the particular, then, is also to be aware of its relation to the whole. This works against the fragmentation of a poststructural approach, which eschews reflection on the whole, and against the universalism of a Habermasian approach, which refuses any particular that cannot be subsumed under an overarching universal in the search for a consensus on truth. Rose makes a clear distinction between dialectical and speculative thought, maintaining that Adorno's reading of Hegel is dialectical and hers speculative;[2] however, I maintain that she makes too much of the distinction both within Hegel's thought and between her own and Adorno's reading

[1] Williams, 'Logic and Spirit in Hegel', p. 116.
[2] See Chapter Four of this thesis.

of Hegel. I thus use 'speculative' as a short-hand for what could also be termed speculative dialectics, choosing speculative rather than dialectical as a descriptor because it carries fewer connotations.[3] 'Speculative' also points to the non-immanent dimension of Adorno and Rose's thought—Adorno's notion of utopian hope, and Rose's use of the personal to speak to the universal.[4]

A focus on suffering is central to ethical reflection because it points to the failure of Enlightenment ideals to live up to their promise. Concrete pain tells us that what is ought not to be, that things ought to be different.[5] Particular suffering must be given voice because it challenges the accepted social conditions and structures that have allowed the suffering in the first place and acts as a counter to strong versions of moral progress under modernity. Adorno's dialectical approach to social criticism enables a fuller comprehension of the ways in which broad social conditions and the particular constitute one another. He advocates a dialectics of resistance whereby the particular refuses to be subsumed into the socially sanctioned *status quo* and thus preserves alternative conceptions of reality that more readily conform to human experience than what is projected as being normal. In one sense, then, Adorno advocates pockets of resistance, not unlike the local struggles advocated by Foucault.[6] However, he argues that these acts of resistance, however fractured or local, always shed light on broad social structures—on the whole—enabling a more comprehensive understanding of those objective

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[3] The term 'dialectical' has strong associations with Marx's critique of Hegel and his development in *Capital* of progressive dialectical materialism. The use of 'speculative' as an alternative descriptive term draws attention to the different way in which Adorno and Rose appropriated Hegel's thought (see Chapters Three and Four).
[4] See especially Rose, *Love's Work*, and Gillian Rose, *Paradiso* (London: Menard Press, 1999).
[5] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 203.
[6] Rabinow, *The Foucault Reader*, p. 174.

conditions that facilitate suffering and revealing the poverty of the instrumental means with which Enlightenment ideals are pursued under modernity. In this way, Adorno advocates an enlightening of Enlightenment, the juxtaposition of bleak reality against abstract ideals.

Attending to concrete suffering draws our focus away from the abstract delineation of guidelines that purport to relieve suffering. It highlights instead the bodily and emotional experience of pain and points to the embodied present rather than an idealised future. A speculative approach insists that attention to the present is accompanied by a consideration of the past, of those (recent or more distant) historical factors that shape our present and that also have the power to shape the future. Rose's emphasis on mourning acknowledges that unless traumatic experiences are worked through, they have the power to negatively influence society; we must work through the past in order to secure a more positive future. W*orking through* operates both on the level of those actually-experienced historical traumas and also on a more abstract level, where the threat of future trauma shapes our actions and reactions.[7] For Rose, working through entails a work of mourning, where individuals and communities express their pain and critically reflect upon the processes and structures that facilitated their suffering. It involves coming to know ourselves and becoming known by others, through critical self-reflection and communication with those inside our own communities as well as between communities. This deeper comprehension prepares the way for constructive political (re)engagement.[8] To act politically is to take *risk*, however, and will inevitably involve disappointments and failures. It requires revisiting those

[7] This second level of trauma is described by Dominick LaCapra as structural trauma, and has been particularly influential in the wake of September 11, 2001, where nations' security fears have shaped policy and been manipulated for political gain.
[8] Although, as noted in Chapters Four and Five, it is impossible to make clear distinctions between mourning and political risk; critical self-reflection is itself a political act, changing perceptions of ourselves and of others.

sites of action and evaluating the consequences of those acts; and revising, again and again, our laws and institutions in response. It is not *euporia*, the easy way; it requires work and struggle.

In sum, speculative political theory advocates a broader and deeper social critique that negotiates the break between the universal and particular. Particular suffering is situated in social context, taking into account structures, institutions, decision-making processes, and historical context. Unlike liberal (or quasi-liberal) approaches that look primarily to the delineation of abstract guidelines for the future, speculative social theory takes seriously the influence that past (and ongoing) human experience has to shape future behaviour. In what follows, I revisit the limitations of liberal approaches to suffering, and show how my speculative approach addresses those failings.

Revisiting the Limitations of Modern International Ethics

In Part One, I identified four key limitations of mainstream (liberal) international political thought: its rational, problem-solving nature, its assumption of a strong version of moral progress, its neglect of social and historical context, and its failure to consider inner lives. I argued that reflection on suffering in mainstream political theory is impoverished and narrow and that this leads to the adoption of problematic responses in an effort to 'fix' those problems that present at a given moment. This operates both at the level of theory and practice: viewing global suffering through a narrow problem-solving lens encourages simple responses that may perpetuate cycles of violence. A critical theory in the tradition of the early Frankfurt School

addresses these limitations, offering an alternative that offers a more comprehensive understanding of suffering in world politics and gestures towards alternative responses that engage with particular suffering as well as taking the risk of pursuing a good enough justice.

Rational and problem-solving

Liberal approaches to suffering in world politics delineate forward-looking guidelines for living on the basis of thought experiments. Rules are established for the good of all behind a 'veil of ignorance' that abstracts from particularity, with the assumption that if these guidelines are adhered to, global suffering will radically decrease.[9] Political theory in this tradition is applied ethics; there is little of the political in such an approach and it tends to exclude such considerations as human nature, emotion, or motivation. Habermasian approaches attempt to outline a more embedded response to suffering under modernity, replacing the abstract and top-down prescription of rules with dialogue among all those affected by a given decision. However, although the aims of a dialogic approach are laudable, the conversation is restricted from the outset; participants engage in goal-oriented dialogue that works towards consensus (Habermas) or understanding (Benhabib). Furthermore, like liberalism, it privileges universal and public responses to suffering, allowing little room for attention to past experiences or alternative forms of expression.

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[9] This notion of a 'veil of ignorance' refers specifically to Rawlsian approaches to global justice which explicitly adopt this approach, but also, more generally, to liberal human rights, which proffer universal guidelines that apply to individuals regardless of their present circumstances or past history, but pay little attention to the move from codification to enforcement.

A speculative approach to suffering offers an understanding of human beings and their relation to their world that is grounded in particularity and allows concrete human experience to feed into a conception of the whole. Unlike a Habermasian approach, which places heavy emphasis on the possibility and desirability of reaching a 'rational consensus' or understanding, a speculative approach allows for dissensus and acknowledges the impossibility of fully perceiving another's point of view. It encourages interaction with the 'radically different'[10] but does not prescribe the form in which this might take place. The emphasis on knowing and being known in Rose's work, in particular, implies communication within and between groups that goes far deeper than rational debate and the exchange of ideas. It draws attention to those aspects of human experience that are largely excluded from consideration under a liberal or Habermasian approach, particularly those more private experiences of bodily pain and emotions that are generally deemed by liberal approaches as having no place in a public forum. This encourages alternative forms of verbal interaction, including an emphasis on those forms that allow an exploration of the emotional world and allow critical reflection on one's own as well as others' assumptions about the world. It also enhances the perception of internal and external complexity, including echoes of others' seemingly dissimilar perspectives in one's own internal dialogue.[11]

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[10] As advocated by Habermasian theorists such as Andrew Linklater, Seyla Benhabib, and Nancy Fraser. See, for example, Benhabib, *Situating the Self* ; Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*; and Linklater, *The Transformation of Political Community*.

[11] See, for example, Jeffrey Stevenson Murer, 'Countering the Violence of Simplification: Embracing Complexity as a means of Conflict Resolution and Understanding Collective Identity Formation', Conference paper presented at *Challenging Cultures of Death*, Institute for Feminism and Religion, Trinity College Dublin, November 1-4, 2007.

Contra liberal (and, to a lesser extent, Habermasian) approaches to suffering, a speculative approach insists that the *political* be brought back into ethics. Rose maintains that we must actively mourn past traumas and work towards a politically engaged present, taking the risk of political action despite the uncertainty of what the consequences may be. This is a difficult task, and involves thinking the universal while remaining grounded in the particular. In Rose's words:

> For politics does not happen when you act on behalf of your own damaged good, but when you act, *without guarantees*, for the good of all—this is to take *the risk* of the *universal* interest. Politics in this sense requires representation, the critique of representation, and the critique of the critique of representation.[12]

The negotiation of the broken middle between law and ethics requires political risk-taking with a strong communal element; we should interrogate our institutions and laws at the level of the state, but also globally. Such an approach takes account of both the particular and the universal; it uses concrete experiences to challenge broad social processes and takes the risk of pursuing a 'good enough justice' through legal and institutional avenues. It also recognises the need to monitor the outcomes of such attempts to inscribe general guidelines, and to revise laws and institutions where there are unintended (negative) consequences.

Assumes moral progress

Underlying problem-solving responses to suffering in global politics are the assumptions that suffering can be ameliorated by a given solution, such as human rights or redistribution, and that global (generally, elite) actors are willing and able to enact those solutions. This strong belief in moral learning encourages actors to view the world through a lens that looks for confirmation of

[12] Rose, *Mourning Becomes the Law*, p. 62, emphasis in original.

progress, and discourages attention to those aspects of human experience that contradict this narrative. Habermasian critical theory is also built on a strong assumption of moral progress. It maintains that moral learning takes place through dialogue, and that in an ideal world this dialogue takes place among all persons affected by decision-making. In this formulation, the force of the better argument leads to a rational consensus on how people might best live together in community, and the increasing expansion of dialogic communities leads to greater inclusion and emancipation from oppression.

A speculative approach to suffering, in contrast, is aware of the fragility of moral progress. It does not fully discount the possibility that global suffering might decrease, but maintains that this is far from inevitable and that any progress that is made towards a less oppressive world might just as easily be reversed. A speculative approach encourages giving voice to concrete suffering as a counter to universalist narratives of progress, which often mask domination and repression. Adorno warns that the dominant discourses of progress under modernity ring so loud that it is difficult to perceive their untruth and that it is the task of engaged intellectuals to point to this untruth by articulating alternative realities. This resistance to the *status quo* takes two forms: it involves countering broad narratives of progress with attention to particular suffering, and, in a double negative move, it also involves countering this articulation of bleak reality with utopian hope, the belief that 'success might be achieved anyway', despite evidence to the contrary.[13] Thus, although Adorno rejects a strong version of moral learning, he clings to a notion of promise. He does not detail what utopia might look like nor does he prescribe a way of achieving it; however, he holds the possibility of progress always before him, both as a counter

[13] Adorno, 'Aspects of Hegel's Philosophy', p. 41.

to despair in view of the bleakness of everyday life, and as a motivator to social criticism and political struggle. Rose also clings to a hope that things might yet get better. She maintains that this life is always already dirempted, that it is irrevocably broken, but that we must take the risk of acting politically and strive towards its healing despite the awareness that it can never be fully mended.

Neglects history and social context

The forward-looking orientation of problem-solving approaches to global suffering means that they largely ignore those historical factors that shape the present, focusing instead on outlining legal guidelines and social arrangements that might minimise that suffering. The desire to delineate universally applicable guidelines means that individual and communal actors are essentially stripped of their particular histories and embeddedness in social and economic structures. Habermasian approaches are more grounded in social context, in that they seek the inclusion of those actors who are affected by political decisions in the dialogue that precedes such decision-making. However, the belief that the force of the better argument will lead to a rational consensus implies that material, social, and historical considerations are at best secondary and need not exercise undue influence on the decision-making process.

A speculative approach to suffering, in contrast, insists upon the situation of individuals and communities in social and historical context. Attention to particularity is essential; this sheds light on broad social processes. Adorno argues that we must critically reflect on the social conditions that allow suffering to take place. In his writings on Auschwitz, especially, he emphasises his belief that what took place did not indicate an absolute *break* with what went

before (as, for example much of Holocaust theology and social theory posits),[14] but rather that there was some degree of continuity with that which preceded it. In his reflections on the notion of coming to terms with the horrors of Auschwitz, he argues that attention to particular suffering must shed light on those 'objective' social and political conditions that facilitated its planning and execution. Only with critical reflection and increased comprehension might deep social changes begin to take place—those changes that must take place if such atrocities are not to recur.[15]

Rose's emphasis on the *work* of mourning also points to the need for attention to those historical factors that have shaped the present and, in particular, to historical traumas that are wielding social and political influence in communities. There is a strong tendency to seek simple explanations for suffering which, in turn, encourage simple responses. However, simple explanations tend to involve pointing the finger of blame—scapegoating—rather than encouraging critical reflection on one's own failings as a community of actors and those structural or institutional arrangements that may have facilitated the trauma. It also encourages revenge-seeking behaviours, which only perpetuate cycles of violence and despair.[16] Rather than following the easy way, Rose argues that we must engage in a difficult work of mourning that critically reflects on the ways in which we are implicated in the disasters of modernity, and that seeks to revise, again and again, those assumptions, conventions, and laws that exclude and oppress.

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[14] For a discussion of this kind of literature, see Robert Fine and Charles Turner (eds.), *Social Theory after the Holocaust* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).
[15] Adorno, 'What does coming to terms with the past mean?'
[16] See the discussion on 'acting out' following trauma in Chapter Five.

Neglects inner lives

As well as neglecting social and historical context, broadly liberal approaches to suffering occlude attention to individuals' inner lives. Individuals are stripped of much of what makes them human; they are conceived of as disembodied rational beings without history or emotion. Habermasian approaches have a more embedded account of moral progress; however, the emphasis on rational dialogue means that those aspects of human experience that are 'beyond words' have little or no place in their account of suffering. Where bodily and emotional pain are made central, for example, in Linklater's recent work on harm, it is not valued in itself, as a counter to narratives of progress or as a way of illuminating the limitations of existing social arrangements. Instead, it is instrumentalised—transformed into 'useful knowledge' that can be used to motivate forward-looking, problem-solving action.

A speculative approach, in contrast, maintains that bodily and emotional experiences of individuals must be given voice, realising that where there has been trauma, narration will take time and struggle, and that much of what has taken place may be inexpressible, particularly at first. It also realises that if these experiences are not worked through, they may prevent constructive political reengagement or prompt negative responses as simple explanations are sought for the pain suffered.

Revisiting Poststructuralism

Much of a speculative critique of mainstream and Habermasian approaches to suffering has strong parallels with a poststructural critique of modern (liberal) ethics. Where liberal approaches emphasise the delineation of universal guidelines that would fix contemporary problems, poststructural approaches urge attention to the particular and are wary of claims that would mend the brokenness of modernity. Where liberal approaches emphasise rationality, poststructural approaches point to those aspects of human experience that cannot be measured or predicted such as bodily and emotional pain (and pleasure). And where liberal approaches are forward-looking, poststructural approaches often look to the past and stress a refusal to forget those historical traumas that point to the limitations of particular conception of modernity. All these poststructural critiques of modern thought have been echoed in my own critique of modern international ethics and my critique has been enriched by borrowing from poststructural thought. However, alongside these commonalities, there are also stark differences between speculative and poststructural thought. Indeed, Rose reserves her harshest critique for poststructuralism, which she deems melancholic and work-shy; and, conversely, poststructural thinkers find the speculative emphasis on working through totalising and depoliticising.[17]

This thesis argues that poststructural thought disrupts those established hierarchies that characterise the liberal *status quo* (such as universal and particular, public and private) and ends up privileging the formerly marginal side of the pair. An emphasis on the particular and the

[17] I am grateful to Melanie Lewis, of the University of Manitoba, for engaging so spiritedly with Chapter Four of this thesis and for helping me to understand the profound gulf between Rose and Derrida's notions of mourning.

private becomes valued as an end in itself, rather than feeding back into reflections on the universal and (communal) working through. A speculative approach to suffering, in contrast, argues that there must be a dialectical interplay between universal and particular; one cannot trump the other. Particular suffering must be given voice; this is in part for the health of the individual who has suffered but it is also for the good of society, in that it sheds light on those conditions that passively allow or actively facilitate particular suffering. Speculative and poststructural approaches to political thought also differ significantly in the ways in which they respond to historical trauma. In poststructural thought, there is a refusal to work through the past for fear of domesticating the traumatic real and for depoliticising those who have suffered. In contrast, from a speculative perspective, a refusal to engage in a proper work of mourning is likely to *depoliticise*: it could prevent those who have suffered from constructive social and political reengagement in life or encourage the adoption of simple meaning-making narratives that prompt demonisation and destructive political action. This thesis argues that *contra* poststructuralism, working through is not a totalising process that encourages the creation of a coherent, linear narrative in order to promote closure in the wake of trauma. On the contrary, working through is a process that will never be complete; trauma can never fully be worked through or fully mended.

In a discussion of working through in relation to the Holocaust, Saul Friedlander helpfully contrasts his notion of working through with a deconstructionist approach, saying that a deconstructionist approach would insist upon 'the impossibility of establishing any direct reference to some aspects at least of the concrete reality that we call the Shoah' and that it would 'exclude any ongoing quest for a stable historical representation'. He goes on to advocate a

notion of working through that struggles towards a more truthful historical account of the Shoah whilst simultaneously refusing a 'naïve historical positivism'.[18] Such an account would reach towards a historical narrative but also includes commentary that disrupts that narrative, introducing alternative voices (such as those of the victims) and interpretations of events and resisting closure by continually interrogating the evidence. Friedlander's account of working through is very much a speculative account: drawing on particular voices to shed light upon (as well as disrupt) a broader historical narrative. In advocating this approach, he offers an alternative to the primary modes of interpretation by Jewish historians which veer between 'hasty ideological closure' and 'a paralysis of attempts at global interpretation'.[19] He also points to the role of literature and art in keeping concrete historical particulars alive in order to prevent forgetting and forestall premature closure.[20]

One of the limitations of this thesis is that, for the sake of clarity, it makes broad generalisations that do not always hold true for individual thinkers who would categorise themselves as poststructural in theoretical orientation. While there is a strong tendency in much of poststructural thought to focus on the particular and the personal rather than considering the universal, this is not always the case. Indeed, Butler's work comes quite close to Rose's in her use of Hegel and in her recent writings on mourning. For example, in a discussion of the risk of negotiating the universal and the particular, Butler, like Rose, draws on Hegel to critique the

[18] Friedlander, 'Trauma and Transference', p. 131.
[19] Friedlander, 'Trauma and Transference', pp. 129-130.
[20] Friedlander, 'Trauma and Transference', p. 134.

abstract universality ushered in by Kantian formalism.[21] She argues that for Hegel, '[n]ot only does universality undergo revision in time, but its successive revisions and dissolutions are essential to what it "is". The propositional sense of the copula must be replaced with the speculative one'.[22] A speculative understanding of universality thus has revisability at its core. Furthermore, this understanding of universality has profound political implications; it encourages the wielding of universal categories by those who have been excluded by them, thereby forcing their revision. Butler's insistence on critical self-reflection in the wake of extreme violence also has clear links with Adorno's writings on coming to terms with the past in the wake of the Holocaust.[23]

In sum, speculative thought offers an approach to suffering that differs substantially from both liberal or quasi-liberal and poststructural approaches. Unlike liberal approaches, it does not too quickly reach for universal guidelines in the hope of solving the world's ills, but conversely, unlike poststructural approaches, it does not shy away from taking the risk of political action on behalf of the many in the hope of a good enough justice. Instead, it insists on a dialectical interplay between the universal and the particular. It allows space for mourning and critical reflection, for sitting with the stories of particular suffering, in the belief that this will illuminate our perceptions of what might be attempted and achieved. It believes that inaugurated mourning allows those who have suffered to know themselves but also to be known by others and, in this way, to challenge those socially-accepted arrangements and practices that facilitate suffering.

[21] Judith Butler, 'Restaging the Universal: Hegemony and the Limits of Formalism', in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 11-43.
[22] Butler, 'Restaging the Universal', p. 24.
[23] See Adorno, 'What does coming to terms with the past mean?'; Butler, *Precarious Life*, pp. 1-18.

Above all, it insists on a politics characterised by work and struggle, a politics that asks hard questions of ourselves and of others, and that takes political risks, knowing that these risks will never mend the inevitable brokenness of living in community, but acting anyway, in the hope that some progress might be made, however fragile.

Further Applications of Speculative Thought

Neither Adorno or Rose has exerted much influence in the world of international political theory, although both have been influential in shaping the thought of scholars from a wide range of discipline areas, including post-Holocaust studies, social theory, theology, cultural studies, and education. There are aspects of both their writings that render them inaccessible or unattractive to political theorists; the prose of both thinkers is (at times self-indulgently) difficult and requires persistence and commitment to unravel, and neither offers a simple or readily-grasped perspective on how one might address political problems. Both Adorno and Rose are also somewhat controversial figures; Adorno stands accused of cultural elitism, particularly by his postmodern critics,[24] and Rose's polemical style, when directed against particular thinkers or styles of thinking, can be less than nuanced in its critique.[25] However, this thesis argues that

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[24] Collins, *Uncommon Cultures*.

[25] For example, as we saw in Chapter Four, Rose's critique of Adorno portrays his reading of Hegel as much less considered than it actually is. She maintains that he inherited much of the left-Hegelian misreading of Hegel, which borrowed the method rather than the content of Hegel's thought. However, it is clear from his three studies on Hegel that Adorno found much of value in the substance of Hegel's thought; his ideas on absolute spirit, for example, provided inspiration for Adorno's negative dialectics and, in particular, for his notion of utopian hope as a negative counter to bleak reality. Indeed, Adorno perceived Hegel as a revolutionary thinker, and in many ways his thought (and the thought of the early Frankfurt School more generally) can be perceived as a return to Hegel from

both Adorno and Rose offer a way of thinking that powerfully addresses the shortcomings of liberal and poststructural approaches to suffering in global politics, and gestures towards an alternative way of thinking and being with political import.

Speculative thought offers an approach to suffering in world politics that falls 'outside ethics' in Geuss' terminology. It does not prescribe guidelines for living that answer the question 'What ought we to do?' Nor does it privilege a type of knowledge that focuses attention on those aspects of human behaviour that can be observed and measured. Instead, it offers a different way of thinking and being that has strong implications for political practice. At the core of a speculative approach is an insistence on struggle: struggle to reach a deeper and more contextualised understanding of political problems, struggle to work through actual historical trauma, and struggle to engage politically, challenging those laws and social arrangements that marginalise and oppress. Speculative thought offers a theoretical intervention—challenging liberal and poststructural accounts of suffering under modernity—but it also has powerful implications for political *practice*.

In the previous chapter, I applied the speculative notions of mourning and political risk to the idea of working through trauma in the wake of violence and gestured towards the forms that this working through might take, including creative expression, storytelling, critical self-reflection, and political activism. I argued that rather than seeing suffering and trauma as problems to be mended, as liberal and Habermasian theorists tend to do, we should view them as opportunities

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Marx. Rose's writings on poststructuralism, too, are polemical and overstate the differences between her work and the work of some poststructural thought. The notions of political risk in her work and the political in some poststructural writings, for example, are more similar than she might admit.

to learn about ourselves and the society in which we live. As Žižek points out, trauma points us to the real, to the dark side of modernity that we prefer to ignore.[26] Poststructural theorists reject the notion of working through, arguing that this domesticates the experience of trauma, making it palatable and unchallenging. However, a speculative notion of working through argues that the disasters of modernity can inspire critical reflection and political action, both of which are part of the process of working through and the (always failed) attempt to comprehend the incomprehensible.

In the remainder of this chapter, I gesture towards two other ways in which a speculative approach might influence practice. First, I apply the notion of mourning and political risk to the political 'problem' of refugees, who are perhaps the most vulnerable group in global politics but who are subjected to inhuman treatment by the international community, who isolate them in great warehouses or make asylum-seeking in a host country extraordinarily difficult. I argue that a speculative approach offers an alternative way forward, focusing particularly on notions of inaugurated mourning and political risk. Second, I step back from those specific political problems that Rose terms the 'disasters of modernity' and consider instead the influence that a speculative approach might have on society in general. I focus primarily on education, which Adorno singles out as being the most important site of potential political transformation, and more specifically on storytelling in the classroom in (early) childhood education. I argue that many of the limitations in political thought and practice have their roots in a much more general societal tendency towards unreflective acceptance of the *status quo* and denigration of the other.

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[26] Žižek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*.

These might be mitigated to some extent if there was a cultural shift such that individuals learned to reflect critically upon their own and their communities' social and political assumptions.

Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

The position of refugees and asylum-seekers in world politics is extremely vulnerable; although they are technically accorded rights by virtue of their humanity under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as stateless citizens they are effectively unable to claim these rights.[27] They are accorded more specific rights under the Refugee Convention and Protocol, including the right to seek asylum in a place of safety where there is a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of origin.[28] In the post-World War II context, the Convention held some persuasive power in the West, in part because of a shared sense of vulnerability in the wake of war. However, in recent years, the right of refugees to seek resettlement has been resisted in discourse and practice and refugees are often warehoused in substandard temporary accommodations, where they are effectively stripped of their humanity, or subjected to adversarial and traumatic asylum-seeking processes in countries where they are made to feel unwanted.

In the post-Cold War environment, the right of refugees to seek asylum under international law has often been re-interpreted by Western states as their right to *intervene* in crises where large

[27] See Schick, 'Beyond Rules', on the tensions inherent in the language of the Universal Declaration, which uses the languages of both cosmopolitan and social liberalism, one of which privileges the individual and the other of which privileges the state.
[28] Convention and Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, (Convention adopted 28 July, 1951, entered into force 22 April, 1954; Protocol adopted 31 January, 1967, entered into force 4 October, 1967), for full text see: http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b66c2aa10.pdf (last accessed 4 March 4, 2008).

groups of people are at risk for economic or political reasons.[29] These interventions frequently address the problem of displaced persons by creating enormous warehouses in which they might find temporary short- (or, more often, medium-) term accommodation.[30] These designated sites of protection are anything but safe for its residents; they are outside the scope of the Convention (being 'temporary') and thus refugees are accorded few rights.[31] The experience of living in such an environment is traumatic in itself; these environments 'maximise almost every negative social factor that fosters illness, such as chronic unemployment and unremitting violence'.[32] In the West, however, this 'solution' to the problem of displaced persons is politically more astute than allowing them to seek asylum and resettlement elsewhere. Warehousing refugees keeps suffering at bay and prevents the traumatic real from impinging on our comfortable, privileged lives. Furthermore, domestic politics are increasingly characterised by a fear of others, a fear that politicians play on in order to engender support and that effectively trumps obligations under international law. Where refugees are accorded temporary asylum in a host country, they are required to undergo an enormously complicated and adversarial process as they seek the right to remain and to rebuild their lives in a place of safety. Despite the right to asylum under international law, this is regularly violated by states who return asylum seekers to their home countries where there is continuing danger of persecution.[33]

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[29] Vanessa Pupavac, 'Refugees in the 'Sick Role': Stereotyping and Eroding Refugee Rights', *New Issues in Refugee Research*, Research Paper No. 128 (August 2006), p. 10. This article can be accessed online at http://www.unhcr.org/publ/RESEARCH/44e198712.pdf (last accessed 4 March, 2008).

[30] Smith, 'Warehousing Refugees'.

[31] Marilyn Achiron, 'A Timeless Treaty under Attack', *Refugees* Vol. 2, No. 123 (2001), pp. 13-14.

[32] Mollica, *Healing Invisible Wounds*, p. 227. In January 1990, before the Site 2 refugee camp on the Thai-Cambodian border was dismantled, Mollica received a letter from a Khmer relief worker that indicated that the ongoing confinement, corruption, and violence in the camp 'eclipsed the violence of the Pol Pot period as a major trauma' and was creating serious mental health problems in a complete denial of the rights or autonomy of its inhabitants (p. 225).

[33] Achiron, 'A Timeless Treaty under Attack', pp. 6-29.

Those refugees who are granted the right to remain in a host country are viewed by their advocates as traumatised victims in need of professional help rather than as autonomous political actors exercising their rights under law. Rights are wielded by professional bodies on their behalf, rather than by those who are suffering from statelessness and insecurity, both internationally, by bodies such as the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, and nationally, by bodies such as the Refugee Council in Britain. The stereotyping of refugees as traumatised victims is in part due to a desire to counter the popular perception of refugees as self-seeking and opportunist; however, despite these noble intentions, it is extremely problematic and harms rather than helps refugee interest.[34] Pupavac warns that refugees are disempowered and depoliticised by their relegation to a 'sick role' and cautions against an overemphasis on individuals' emotional suffering by refugee organisations.[35]

The professional treatment of refugees who have suffered trauma is generally characterised by its narrow focus on the horrific events of a trauma story and the prescription of psychotropic drugs and a refusal to consider their broader social needs or to support self-healing. This arrogant and externally-imposed approach to trauma sufferers ignores the tremendous resources of those who have suffered to help themselves, part of which requires integration into communities and the opportunity to rebuild self-respect through the engagement in productive work.

[34] Pupavac, 'Refugees in the 'Sick Role', pp. 1-24.
[35] Pupavac, 'Refugees in the 'Sick Role', pp. 20-24.

However, a serious engagement with refugees' traumatic experiences need not entail their relegation to the 'sick role' and consequent depoliticisation. Mollica, a trauma practitioner who has worked with refugees for decades, argues that refugees must be empowered to engage in self-help practices. His emphasis on the notion of self-healing has strong affinities with a speculative approach, which emphasises the need for refugees to *work through* their losses. A speculative approach to trauma prioritises attention to emotional and physical trauma, but does so in order to promote a working through that has at its centre a reflection on broader social processes and political (re)engagement. Rose's notion of mourning and political risk is extremely useful in conceptualising how these losses might be worked through. The different dimensions discussed in the previous chapter are appropriate here—creative expression, storytelling, and critical self-reflection; these are all critical in enabling political agency in those who have suffered, be it as the result of traumatic experiences in their home country or as the result of forced displacement to a foreign land, far from established networks of social support. Rose's emphasis on the *communal* aspect of working through is also crucial where individuals have experienced such horrific displacement.[36]

Honig argues that foreigners, including refugees, disrupt the *status quo* and that this disturbance can prompt rethinking and change.

> Legitimation theorists worry that alienation can be a source of civic cynicism and withdrawal. It can. But it can also be a source of civic activism, unrest, and protest.

[36] However, in Britain, official dispersal policies are making it increasingly difficult for refugees to access support in a community of others from their country of origin. Pupavac argues that these policies make the professionalisation of support even more pervasive, as refugees no longer have the same access to informal support from existing communities. Pupavac, 'Refugees in the Sick Role', pp. 18-19.

> The positive side of 'alienation' is that it marks a gap in legitimation, a space that is held open for future refoundings, augmentation, and amendment.[37]

Alienation and displacement provide an opportunity for refugees to engage in political protest and to challenge the *status quo*. Refugees should be encouraged to engage in a work of self-healing and supported in that working through, in order to facilitate political reengagement that challenges those practices that dehumanise and depoliticise them.

The experience of refugees in world politics, like the experience of trauma, disturbs the mainstream liberal and critical Habermasian belief in moral progress under modernity. It points to persistent suffering, despite attempts to enshrine human rights in law and to rationally persuade individuals and communities of the inalterable value of humanity. Both 'disasters of modernity' point to the dark side of so-called progress, to the persistent disregard for human life despite Enlightenment values. The task of a critical intellectual is to enlighten Enlightenment, holding up these failures of lived experience against Enlightenment ideals in the hope that this will prompt reflection and change. In the next section, I take a step back from specific disasters of modernity in order to discuss the role of education in promoting a different way of thinking and being in the world.

Education

Education is another arena in which political risk should be attempted. Adorno maintains that schooling, especially early education, has the greatest potential to effect change that might

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[37] Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner*, p. 31

reduce the likelihood of Auschwitz recurring: ‘in the midst of the *status quo* it alone has the ability, if it is conscious of it, to work directly toward the debarbarization of humanity’.[38] As we have seen, he insists that Auschwitz was not an aberration in an otherwise unproblematic march toward an increasingly humanitarian world, but that it was in some sense the logical outcome of broader societal processes that allowed the barbarism to continue for so long and with such horrifying results. In ‘Education After Auschwitz’, Adorno argues that the possibility of transforming the objective political and societal conditions that contributed to the genocide is ‘extremely limited’ but that some progress might be made in the subjective realm—namely, through education.[39]

Adorno’s approach to education is very much ‘outside ethics’ in that it does not aim to instil universal values about, for example, the equal worth of all human beings.[40] On the contrary, Adorno believes that a problem-solving approach is likely to be counterproductive, for three reasons. First, he maintains that externally-imposed beliefs and duties are unlikely to have much influence on those individuals who might commit or condone oppression, torture, or genocide of those they consider to be their inferiors. Second, he argues that an instrumental appeal to a common humanity is likely to be perceived as ‘untrue’, as being a means to an end rather than a truth in itself. Third, he argues that the prescription of rules and norms that must be adhered to encourages blind obedience of authority in the place of the exercise of reason and the

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[38] Theodor W. Adorno, ‘Taboos on the Teaching Vocation’, in Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Colombia University Press, 2005), p. 190.
[39] Adorno, ‘Education After Auschwitz’.
[40]Unlike the cosmopolitan education advocated in Ken Booth and Tim Dunne, ‘Learning Beyond Frontiers’, in Tim Dunne and Nicholas J. Wheeler, *Human Rights in Global Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 303-328.

development of one's own conscience and that this was one of the major subjective factors that facilitated the Nazi genocide.[41] Rather than the delineation of rules or the construction of dialogic communities in which consensus reigns, then, Adorno advocates 'an education toward critical self-reflection'[42] with two dimensions: childhood education and general intellectual and cultural enlightenment.

At the core of a speculative education toward critical self-reflection is a countering of indifference towards pain—hardness—and indifference towards others—coldness. Hardness is bred through the educational system, which does not allow the expression of pain or anxiety, and is self-perpetuating: 'Whoever is hard with himself earns the right to be hard with others as well and avenges himself for the pain whose manifestations he was not allowed to show and had to repress'.[43] This cycle of hardness with ourselves and others must be halted; we must be made aware of the cultivation of hardness in the educational system and its effects, and counter it by allowing the freer expression of pain and anxiety, both in the classroom and in society more generally. We must learn to feel our own pain and to communicate it with others. We must also learn to listen to others' stories and to face those senseless horrors that take place both within our communities and worldwide; if we do not, they are sure to recur. Coldness, a profound indifference toward all those except those with whom they have close (often self-interested) ties, is another psychological characteristic that is prevalent under modernity. The reigning principle of the *status quo* is to look out for one's own interests first and foremost; this was put to the test again and again by the Nazi regime and it rarely failed. Once again, Adorno advocates

[41] Adorno, 'Education After Auschwitz', pp. 192-195.
[42] Adorno, 'Education After Auschwitz', p. 193.
[43] Adorno, 'Education After Auschwitz', p. 198.

enlightenment in the face of coldness, making society aware of its coldness and of the horrific consequences it engenders.[44] This is the first step towards being able to love, which is the antithesis of coldness, but which cannot be imposed from above.

Adorno's ideas on education have powerful commonalities with more recent psychological and educational writings on critical reflection and storytelling in the classroom. In what follows, I discuss two practical educational programmes that aim to develop critical self-reflection in the classroom. Both focus on the countering of emotional hardness and coldness towards others. They come from very different educational contexts: the first programme was developed in Israel, in part to help students cope with living in a situation of ongoing trauma, and the second was developed in the United States, where the challenges to students' emotional health are less traumatic, but no less real.

Moses-Hrushovski argues that the classroom is a powerful forum for shaping societies' attitudes and reactions to adverse events.[45] Drawing on her own work as a psychoanalyst and educator of teachers and guidance counsellors, as well as her work with children, she advocates a shift in atmosphere in the classroom, so that students' learning experiences take place in an environment of trust rather than fear. She argues that teachers need to communicate appreciation and affirmation rather than suspicion and disappointment; these attitudes create an environment in which students can express their creativity and explore new ideas without fear of being shut down. Where students are humiliated by their teachers or fellow students, they often react by

[44] Adorno, 'Education after Auschwitz', pp. 200-204.
[45] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 172-186.

adopting deployment strategies. However, where students feel able to make mistakes without fear of being belittled and to express and explore their emotions creatively, they become acquainted with different aspects of themselves and of others. In this environment, students learn to feel less threatened by complexity and ambiguity and increasingly comfortable with the co-existence of multiple perspectives internally and externally. In speculative terms, they are better able to know and be known, and thus to engage positively in community.

One of Moses-Hrushovski's colleagues, Dvorah Koubovi, has developed a programme of 'therapeutic teaching' that trains teachers to become increasingly sensitive to the inner lives of their students and may be used in the classroom to encourage emotional health and well-being. The programme uses literature or religious narratives as a vehicle for teaching children about emotions and pointing to different ways of thinking and being. The teacher conducts discussions of the characters' feelings and the ways in which they were expressed; this helps children to begin exploring the emotional world without necessarily having to share their own complex and, at times, raw emotions.[46] In this way, children are given a forum in which they can mourn their own losses through the exploration of others' losses. They have permission to listen and reflect upon others' traumatic experiences in a safe environment, and to talk with their classmates about how that makes them feel and, if they wish, they may share their own memories in turn. They are able to engage in the work of mourning, to sit with their complex emotions and process them

[46] Note that this programme was developed for use in schools in Israel, where there is extensive ongoing trauma and heightened anxiety.

aloud, knowing that they are not alone in their grief and learning to connect their individual experiences with others' similar experiences.[47]

David Schaafsma is another educator who has developed a programme to encourage critical reflection in schools.[48] He argues that most academic writing aims to 'develop one persuasive and singular voice',[49] crafting rational arguments that leave little room for the exploration of individuals' or groups' complex inner worlds. As a counter to this, he maintains that teachers should allow space for students to tell their own stories; stories that challenge students' commonly held perceptions about themselves and others and that encourage tolerance of complexity and ambiguity. He maintains that storytelling and creative narrative allows the expression (and assimilation) of alternative viewpoints and that this points to alternative worlds—to the utopian hope that things might yet be different. In a project entitled 'Write for your life', Schaafsma and colleagues encouraged student teachers to write about their experiences in order to explore the role that storytelling might play in the classroom. Students wrote personal stories about health and well-being, which were expressed in a variety of forms, including poetry, film, drama, and creative narrative. In doing so, Schaafsma asked his students to move beyond their silences and to use the opportunity to express those feelings and explore those aspects of themselves that they may not otherwise have done. In speculative terms, he found that as well as acting as a counter to the *status quo*, in allowing for the expression of

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[47] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, pp. 181-182. See also Ofra Ayalon, 'Is Death a Proper Subject for the Classroom? Comments on Death Education', *International Journal of Social Psychiatry*, Vol. 25 (1979), pp. 252-257.
[48] David Schaafsma, 'Things We Cannot Say: Writing for your Life and Stories in English Education', *Theory into Practice* Vol. 35, No. 2 (1996), p. 110.
[49] Schaafsma, 'Things We Cannot Say', p. 112.

emotion and the opportunity to know and be known, the exercise also inspired students to reflect on broader social processes and motivated social action and political risk.[50]

Towards a Speculative International Political Thought?

This thesis has made the case for a speculative approach to thinking about suffering in world politics. A speculative approach offers a way of negotiating the universal and the particular, public and private, without privileging one category over the other. The persistence of suffering in world politics requires making space for those who have suffered to give voice to their pain. This focus on particular suffering then feeds back into broader social categories: it facilitates a work of mourning, which in turn enables constructive social and political engagement.

Speculative international political thought, then, does not prescribe particular courses of action in answer to the question 'What ought we to do?' Instead, it proffers a different way of thinking and of being in the world with political import, both in terms of how we might think about and respond to particular disasters of modernity but also, more broadly, in terms of our approach to education and culture. As we have seen, a speculative approach speaks to those who have personally suffered specific historical traumas, in the wake of discrete or ongoing political

[50] Schaafsma found that when he used the model in middle-school classrooms, students used the opportunity to explore health issues such as teenage pregnancy and that this spurred them on to socially-aware involvement in the community: 'the girls engaged with public health professionals and other community resources in a number of ways, and raised money through the production and sale of greeting cards for an area shelter. Most of them, middle school students, had themselves been or were now pregnant. Their inquiry was relevant to their lives, was conducted in part through writing and the study of literature, and for many of them involved various forms of social action'. ('Things We Cannot Say', p. 112).

violence, natural disaster, or displacement and exile. It also speaks to those who have experienced structural or second-hand trauma, including those whose lives have been shaped by a history of oppression (such as those indigenous peoples whose lands and ways of life were taken from them) or the inter-generational transmission of trauma (such as the descendents of Holocaust survivors). A speculative approach emphasises *working through* in response to such traumas: a dialectical process that requires critical reflection on one's own (and others') particular pain as well as reflection on concrete historical reality and the social processes that facilitated the trauma(s). This process of working through such pain is never complete; however, it encourages those who have suffered to struggle to know better themselves and the communities of which they are a part and also to make their stories known: to enlighten Enlightenment and point to the bleak realities that are hidden by its discourses of progress. The process of working through thus involves political risk, both in terms of acting politically when the outcome is unknown and taking the risk of the universal, of pursuing a 'good enough justice' on the behalf of many that will inevitably need revisiting and revising.

As well as offering an alternative way of thinking about trauma in global politics, a speculative approach also offers a different approach to education. It advocates an education towards *critical self-reflection*; education that attempts not to instil absolute values, but rather to cultivate a different way of thinking about ourselves and others. Such an education would attempt to counter the development of hardness and coldness by encouraging the exploration of children's own emotions as well as insight into how others might feel through storytelling and literature. It would also encourage a questioning, reflective outlook on the world, one that refuses to hold fast

to a particular point of view, but is open to revision and challenge from other perspectives. A speculative education will not change the world. However, in Moses-Hrushovski's words:

> When individuals and groups can keep in their awareness opposing ideas and paradoxes, to forestall premature closure; when they can change terror and violence into cultural discourse and tolerance, and free themselves from the unconscious defence mechanisms and deployment that fan fanaticism and work against development, there is hope that change will occur in the direction of reconciliation and peace.[51]

A speculative approach to world politics is not an easy path. On the contrary, it involves constant struggle and inevitable failures along the way. However, it holds always before it the promise that things might yet get better and maintains that we cannot give up the attempt to work towards a good enough justice, a justice that is always to come.

[51] Moses-Hrushovski, *Grief and Grievance*, p. 161.

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