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EXPLORING ETHICS AND METAPHYSICS IN CONTEMPORARY CRITICAL THEORY: MOVING BEYOND THE POST-METAPHYSICAL SHIFT

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Introduction

In Outside Ethics, Raymond Geuss (2005, 127) remarks that in its contemporary post-metaphysical phase, critical theory has undergone a 'distinct loss in critical power, and even an abandonment of the original critical intention of the [Frankfurt] School'. This scepticism towards 'post-metaphysical' critical theory is shared by a growing number of commentators (see Bernstein 2004; Dews 2008; Cook 2011; Bowie 2013; O'Connor 2013), and the impression that it is bound to be affirmative can only have been reinforced by Honneth's (2010; 2014) recent renunciation of an anthropologically grounded recognition theory in favour of a merely rational reconstructive Hegelian enterprise on the model of a post- metaphysical Philosophy of Right. Critical theory continues to ask about its viability, and one of the best recent contributions to the conversation is Fabian Freyenhagen's Adorno's Practical Philosophy: Living Less Wrongly, which carefully and sensitively recon- structs Adorno's ethics and critical theory as a whole as a species of radical negative Aristotelianism (see my summary of the book in Reeves 2016 [in this issue]). Freyen-Hagen's Aristotelian actualization of Adorno suggests that the post-metaphysical phase of critical theory has been

motivated by a fundamental misunderstanding of Adorno. Freyenhagen focuses on making sense of Adorno's specifically ethical claims, but in the context of the wider critical theory conversation, it is also a timely restatement of the philosophical tenability of the original critical theory project of radical negation as against the Habermasian/Honnethian drift towards the affirmative acceptance of the basic structures of modern social life.

In my view Freyenhagen's case is admirably well-put and essentially correct: Adorno, like Marx, can only be properly understood as a radical Aristotelian, and recent critical theory has been premised on, among other things, a failure to appreciate this. However, I want to argue that Freyenhagen attempts to reconstruct Adorno's Aristotelian critical theory in a metaphysically (or ontologically) agnostic or neutral way; that he is wrong to do so because Adorno's position — as Freyenha- gen sees it —presupposes metaphysical commitments of a

broadly Aristotelian kind, detached from which it cannot be made properly intelligible or defensible; and that by avoiding metaphysical issues Freyenhagen's account leaves a range of important questions about Adorno's position insufficiently addressed.

In presenting a metaphysically neutral Adorno, Freyenhagen seems implicitly to concede a crucial issue to post-metaphysical critical theory, by tacitly admitting the claim that metaphysical neutrality is possible and desirable. This claim is, I think (though I shan't argue this in detail here), false. That is, any critical theory (probably any substantive philosophical theory generally) will presuppose metaphysical com- commitments.

Before going on, though, a word on 'metaphysics' (or 'ontology'): for it might immediately be objected that Adorno explicitly rejects metaphysics as a positive enterprise, so any attempt to attribute to him Aristotelian metaphysical commitments is hermeneutically eccentric and/or plain wrong. There are two responses to this. First, Adorno might simply have laboured under a self-misunderstanding so far as the metaphysical/ontological presuppositions of his critical theory are concerned. Second, though, while Adorno makes numerous remarks critical of metaphysics or ontology, these are generally aimed at specific metaphysical or ontological projects, such as the Kantian metaphysical postulates, Hegel's metaphysics of history, or Heidegger's fundamental ontology.

By 'metaphysics' (or 'ontology') I mean reflection on the most general (categorial, logical, etc.) structures of being and becoming presupposed by the intelligibility of forms of activity, including forms of thought. It asks 'What does the intelligibility of X presuppose about the world?', where X will be some important phenomenon the intelligibility of which we are already committed to, such as natural science or intentional action, and in the present context is, to begin with, 'a negative Aristotelian Critical Theory like Adorno's'. This is what we could call a 'post-critical Aristotelian' conception of metaphysical inquiry which, as Bhaskar (1986, 10–27) elucidates it, is transcendental yet immanent to and contingent on its objects (X).

The questions posed are thus of a Kantian (i.e. transcendental) sort, but are not assumed to produce a Kantian answer — they may lead us to Aristotelian results, and hence lead potentially to transcendental realist rather than idealist conclusions (Groff 2004, ch. 2 and McWherter 2013). Something like this post-critical meta-physical inquiry with Aristotelian-realist conclusions is what seems to be at work in certain important recent Aristotelian philosophy.

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Freedom, social determinism and metaphysical presuppositions:

Let me begin with the issue of freedom and determination. Adorno's central claim here is that the problem of freedom is really that our wrong form of society heteronomously determines individuals' actions, but that this is a historically contingent situation: individuals are unfreely determined to act in bad ways in existing social conditions but this is not an absolute or unchangeable state of affairs.8 For Adorno, Kant's account of freedom articulates important truths, but it badly distorts them: to say we are necessarily absolutely determined insofar as we are natural beings turns a contingent problem with our 'second nature' into a metaphysically fixed one, and to posit a source of free will beyond the empirical world makes a realistic aspiration into a metaphysical given while rationalizing the unfree societal status quo. Given the importance of this argument in Adorno's moral philosophy, it is surprising that Freyenhagen largely avoids getting into Adorno's metacritique of Kant's

Third Antinomy itself. It means a crucial stage in Adorno's argument is not defended: that the Kantian theory of free will must fail because it is premised on a faulty — strictly event-causally deterministic — metaphysics of nature (Adorno 1973, 247–9). Adorno's point is that societal determination, which is historically contingent and changeable, has been misconstrued as owing to nature's causal order, but this point can only stick if decent reasons are given to think that the standard event-causal deterministic picture of nature is wrong.

Now Adorno (1973, 247–8, 265–70; 1999, 44–54) does give such reasons, in his criticism of the fundamentally positivist, event-causal metaphysics Kant inherited from Hume. Kant had systematic motives for collapsing social determinism and natural determinism: his event-causal ontology as developed in the first Critique treats causal determination in a formalistic way as the rule-governed necessity linking events in temporal sequence. On this view, there is no space for a qualitative distinction between kinds of causal constraint on freedom, for no matter what the cause, be it natural, social or psychological, the form of necessitation is the same and equally binding and hostile to freedom. It is because of this formalist or 'external', in Adorno's terms, treatment of causality as a rule-governed necessity holding temporally in the chain of events that Kant can treat all kinds of cause indiscriminately. To put it another way, it is not any particular cause that threatens freedom, for Kant, but the formal structure of the empirical world — falling under the law of causality. But then what difference can it make to freedom what particular causes are involved if every action is anyway

equally inexorably necessitated by preceding empirical events/appearances according to causal laws?

Such problems suggest that Adorno's criticism of Kant can be made intelligible only in light of Adorno's critique of the basic ontological assumptions, taken over from Hume, that inform Kant's conception of nature's order. That picture is one in which we must be able to analyse causality into connections holding between events, so that the cause of some change is always a prior chain of events from which it follows according to a rule, and it is striking how much of a hold it has come to exert over modern philosophy. It is not simply Kant's view of causal necessity as in some sense subjectively supplied that is decisive, but the event-causal premise of that subjective supplement, for on that premise causes must be events, and it is then inevitable that the causal relation must be construed as an 'if-then' relation that 'does not reside in the thing's themselves' (Adorno 1999, 50). Adorno (1973, 248) explicitly rejects this metaphysical picture because of the 'externality' of nature's order in it, objecting that it 'insulates causality against the interior of objects' and will not allow the simple thought that 'a state of things might have something essential, something specific to do with the succeeding state of things' Adorno (248).

Without taking the implications of these remarks seriously we cannot make proper sense of Adorno's objection to Kant, but Freyenhagen (2013, 260, 262) attributes to Adorno's agnosticism on this issue, only saying that 'for all we know, nature in itself is not deterministically structured' and that 'we tend to misattribute any restrictions on our freedom by impersonal forces to nature'. But whether this is a misattribution depends on whether or not nature is deterministic: 'for all we know' is not enough. For if nature is strictly deterministic, it is unclear how Adorno has not simply fallen back behind the problematic of the Third Antinomy, for it is unclear then how freedom is possible within nature, even as an unfulfilled potentiality to be brought about in changed social conditions, and it is unclear what the point of focusing on societal determination would be if nature were any way heteronomously deterministic. When Adorno (2005, 85) says that 'a rigorous determinism, for all the accuracy with which it expresses the unfreedom of people within the established order, would in effect have nothing convincing to oppose to the praxis of Auschwitz', he seems to accept Kant's incompatibilist intuition that if nature were (in Kant's sense) deterministic, then freedom, and hence ethical resistance, would not be possible within nature; but he denies the antecedent: we should reject Kant's deterministic construction of nature, on the independent grounds already

considered (that it cannot make proper sense of causality or agency, let alone accommodate freedom). So Adorno is not agnostic on the meta- physical question of whether nature is deterministic in Kant's (ultimately positivist) sense. Adorno's claims that social determination is the most significant barrier to freedom, that freedom is in principle possible within nature, and that we incorrectly ascribe social determination to nature, together commit him (and Freyenhagen) to a negative metaphysical claim: that nature is not, as Kant holds, heteronomously deterministic.

But Adorno's account of the problem of freedom also presupposes positive metaphysical commitments. For on the face of it, it is unclear what would be involved in insisting that society is deterministic but that nature is not (see Freyenhagen 2013, 262 n. 34), and we certainly cannot make this claim intelligible with the metaphysical resources of the Kant-Hume event-causal picture. The social world is, after all, part of nature, so we need some account of what nature's non-deterministic causal order is like such that it is intelligible for societies to be deterministic in ways that we are then tempted to misconstrue as flowing from the metaphysical structure of nature.

What metaphysical picture is required? Adorno (1973, 250, 269) gives hints, which he doesn't develop, when he insists that 'the chance of freedom increases along with the objectiveness of causality', and when he says that we should look for 'the moment [in causality] that isn't cogitative'. Such remarks could naturally be construed as pointing towards a broadly Aristotelian metaphysical picture in which causality pertains not to the necessity in connections between discrete events (which can only be supplied by subjective reason, in the form of 'if-then' rules), but to the powers and capacities to bring about change that objects (including subjects) possess in virtue of their natures. This Aristotelian view of

nature's order, swept away by the modern preoccupation with event-causal, its event-based metaphysics, understands causality not in event-causal terms, but as referring to things actively exercising or displaying their powers and capacities, and it under- stands judgements of 'efficient' (or, better, primary) cause to be only part of the story, alongside the equally fundamental categories of formal and material cause. This critique of the positivist view of causality and the alternative Aristotelian metaphysical picture has been the object of growing interest over the last 40 years to philosophers working in the philosophy of science (e.g. Harré

and Madden 1975; Bhaskar 1975; Mumford 1998; Ellis 2007; Cartwright 2013) and of action (e.g.Taylor 1966; Anscombe 1981; Thompson 2008; Lowe 2008; Steward 2012). It allows causality to be construed as objective and interior to the objects, rather than as a function of the transcendental operation of reason bringing necessarily rule-governed order to the empirical manifold, and it insists on the non-identity of causality and our thought about causality, i.e. it insists on preserving the moment that is 'not cogitative' (and even 'not empirical').

The Aristotelian picture allows us to say, quite properly, that subjects are active causes of change in a world of active causers of change, so that we can quite properly say that nature is not, in the Kantian, event-causal sense, deterministic, that nature is not per se alien to human freedom, which is precisely what Adorno wants to say. Actions are not necessitated by prior events according to rules: nature is not per se heteronomous.

Aristotelian ethics and metaphysical presuppositions:

Habermas's (1983, 106) well-known criticism of Adorno alleges a failure to 'answer the question how critical thought can be justified', setting the agenda for critical theory since to becomes preoccupied with 'normative foundations. Freyenhagen's point (2013, chs 7–9), I take it, is that it is question-begging to the demand of Adorno a discursive justification for his ethical claims, given that such a demand is peculiar to certain (Kantian and consequentialist) conceptions of ethical theory that Adorno rejects, whereas a major strand in Western ethical thought — the Aristotelian tradition — has always systematically rejected such a demand. It makes more sense, for Freyenhagen (and I agree), to interpret Adorno as occupying an Aristotelian position on metaethical questions and to see if his ethical theory can be rendered consistent with such a position. And that means reconciling an Aristotelian metaethics with Adorno's 'negativism'.

While for Aristotle (2000), a normative theory is not expected to justify ethical knowledge, merely to elucidate and account for it, that is because for Aristotle the ethical materials are uncontroversially given in a shared culture. Aristotle is speaking only to those who can see that the ethical propositions he takes as his material are true. His normative theory is relieved of the need to engage in discursive justification by a methodological parochialism that simply does not consider the possibility of pervasive ethical error. But Adorno's critical theory is not in the same boat; its intention is precisely to criticize the lion's share of what

passes for the ethical phenomena in modernity. While Aristotle is interested in addressing only those who already agree with him about human excellence, Adorno is addressing the subjects of wrong life who are assumed not to agree with him because they are participants in a deeply distorting form of life. This fact is the motive for Habermas's and Honneth's insistence on the need for critical theory to be able to redeem its normative claims in a discourse with the social participants who are its addressees. Freyen- Hagan's response to this problem is that this flight into discursive justification, which has after all had a deflationary impact on critical theory, is unnecessary if one can redeem an Aristotelian account of Adorno's meta-ethical commitments. This is possible because what stands in for Aristotle's context of prior agreement on ethical phenomena in Adorno is the explanatory power of the critical theory as a whole.

Although Adorno makes controversial ethical claims that he refuses to discursively ground, they can still be redeemed if the general theory that elucidates and accounts for them has superior explanatory power about the phenomena of modern social life generally. It is in the explanatory power of the whole critical theory that the redemption of its normative claims lies Freyenhagen (2013, 207).

On this view, as I see it, Adorno's ethical criticism of modern societies amounts to the claim that they prevent subjects from realizing their true nature or essence. so that individuals can exist only in privative or mutilated form (which also explains why freedom, understood as the power to live according to one's real nature, is unavailable). Modern social life is false in that it is not really what it implicitly is, qua form of life, and presents itself as being: a suitable home for human beings, given the kind of things we are. But this position raises several metaphysical questions, and about these Freyenhagen is reticent. The standing and method of a critical theory such as Adorno's remain questionable so long as they remain unaddressed.

When we make normative judgements about a life form, such as that the grizzly bear has four legs and powerful jaws, we are making a judgement not about a particular but about a form, 'grizzly bear'. Our true judgements about what is proper or essential to the grizzly bear (as opposed to what is merely accidental) are justified by their having a determinate place in a teleologically related system of judgements that say what the grizzly bear does per se, or in the good or essential case. What this specifies is the life cycle of the grizzly bear, the unfolding process by which the individuals reproduce their form. A particular grizzly bear may not measure up to the standards in such an account — we may find one that has three legs, for

example; we do not thereby change our description of the grizzly bear; rather, we make a judgement of this bear that it is lacking something, it is in certain respect privative qua the kind of thing it is. When we make judgments about the grizzly bear, about the life form, we are not making empirical descriptions or statistical generalizations (indeed, what is proper to a life form, an integrated element of its life cycle, may well be statistically very rare
— as Thompson is fond of pointing out, most offspring of most species never make it to reproductive maturity), but are talking about what is proper or essential to a particular given the kind it bears. We are making judgments about the powers and activities a grizzly bear qua grizzly bear has and does, the parts it has, the life stages it goes through, and the rhythms of its life. Such judgements are normative. When we judge that a particular individual lacks something proper to its life form, we are judging that in this respect it exists privatively. It is a judgement of natural defects. The standard of goodness by which such a judgement is made is identified in the description of the life-form itself: 'the system of natural-historical propositions of a given kind or form as subject supplies such a standard [of goodness] for members of that kind' (Thompson 2008, 80). The other important point to make is that for Thompson the life-form plays the fundamental explanatory role in accounting for what happens in the course of an individual's life, insofar as things go as they should, while it is

when things go wrong that appeal must be had to the empirical happenstance of the here and now, such as pathology or accident.

If this account is right, there is nothing peculiar about the form of ethical judgements, to which it extrapolates. The standard of goodness implicit in normative judgements in the human case is the human life form. Thompson's major contribution is to show that the metaphysical category of the life-form is a necessary condition of the intelligibility of our thought about life, and so of the biological sciences, and if that is so then invoking it in ethics raises no special problem for ethics per se. Although there are special problems about how to cash out how this structure would work in the context of a negative Aristotelianism like Adorno's, we can see how it could underwrite the naturalistic normative claims of Adorno's critical theory. The 'basic outlook' of the Aristotelian position, Freyenhagen (2013, 234) writes, is that 'goodness and badness are linked to the human life-form, to what humanity and inhumanity consist in', and Adorno's position differs only in contending that what humanity consists in, and so the good, is not yet knowable because humanity is not yet actualized (239), while inhumanity and the bad are actual and so knowable. The sense, then, in which the modern

social world is thoroughly bad, and individual subjects are deformed or mutilated or not yet properly free, human or themselves, is that in which human beings as they currently exist instantiate the human life-form only privatively.

It often seems that Freyenhagen cannot think this, as when he writes that 'the objective requirements faced by a particular life-form are indexed to its tele- ology' (2013, 233). But if that's right, it's hard to see how we can defend an Aristotelian Adorno without defending 'Aristotelian biology or human teleology'. Rather, naturalistic normative judgements that index the bad to inhumanity seem to make sense only on the presupposition of the metaphysical concept of the human life-form as the form human individuals bear, though they do not empirically actualize it, and against which their existence can be measured. Even if it is as yet unactualized, and supposing this means it is substantively unknowable (I shall suggest later that things may be more complicated than this), it must at least be conceivable as real, otherwise there is no standard even in principle to which the judgement about the current badness of our existence can be responsible. The normative force of the idea that in our current state, we are not actualizing our life form flows from the fact that there is some determinate form which we both bear and yet do not properly actualize, that is, we bear it privatively. Freyenhagen suggests that the life-form is comparable to 'Weber's ideal types' (234 n. 3), but those take their place within an idealist set of assumptions that makes this an inapt comparison. The life form is not metaphysical in the Platonic sense, of course (Thompson 2008, 62), but neither is it simply a conceptual construct. If the life form is conceived as a construct rather than as an unactualized reality, it is unclear what the meaning of statements about our current privation actually means: they would appear to be decisions rather than judgements capable of registering objective states of affairs.13 But the whole point of the Aristotelian view is that normative judgements flow from the immanent standards that are given in the (possibly unactualized but) real nature or form a particular being bears.

That Adorno's Aristotelianism must presuppose a metaphysics of the life-form is also suggested by the costs to other versions of Aristotelianism of renouncing such a metaphysics. Consider the kind of unmetaphysical Hegelian Aristotelianism associated with McDowell (1998, Part 2). This version eschews a metaphysics of the life- form, but this comes at the cost of an affirmative acceptance of our form of life as that which supplies us with the context needed to acquire as a second nature the capacities for perceiving natural normativity. Such an Aristotelianism can, like its cousin Wittgensteinianism, do without a metaphysics only because

it has climbed up the ladder of a Hegelian metaphysics of history before kicking it away. The denial of the legitimacy of a metaphysics of the human life-form ends up functioning in the same way as a Hegelian teleology of the human form as self-actualizing and self-actualized. Or take MacIntyre's view in After Virtue (1985), which also rejected Aristotelian metaphysics, substituting it with the concept of tradition. That left MacIntyre with only a conservative retreat to a lost world of traditional practices and communities to oppose to modernity. In other words, without a metaphysics of the life form, Aristotelian ethics lacks any obvious critical purchase as against the modern form of life, and cannot be carried out negatively. Although we may be able to apprehend it only negatively we must presuppose in so doing that there is something we are negatively apprehending. So it might be thought that an elucidation and defence of Adorno's position will require metaphysically deepening it by exploring the metaphysical concept of an unactualized human form about which Freyenhagen remains uncommitted. These difficulties include, in particular, two problems.

The first problem is that of explicating how, given the structure of naturalistic normative judgements in general, we can make intelligible a negative critical theory that posits our epistemic access to the bad in a world in which the good is unactualized, and this leads back to the questions of what such negative access to natural norma- tivity must metaphysically presuppose and of what implications this may have for a strict negativism such as Freyenhagen defends. These issues lead me to affirm the inevitable appeal to a concept of the unactualized human life-form that has metaphysical status, to propose certain revisions of Freyenhagen's account of the strict negativism of Adorno's critical theory, and to insist on the need to make metaphysically perspicuous and plausible the concepts of unfulfilled potential and human teleology in terms of Aristotelian categories.

The second, and perhaps most fundamental, problem is how the concept of a teleologically constituted human life-form that is unactualized (to which negative epistemic access inevitably appeals) is to be made intelligible. If the teleological life-cycle of the human is as-yet unactualized, what if anything does that concept refer to when we apply or appeal to it now? This problem concerns the puzzle of how to make sense of an unactualized teleologically structured life-cycle. I shall suggest that this problem takes us into the metaphysics of suffering and need, and is potentially soluble just in virtue of the special character of the human life-form as a form of rational life.

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The metaphysics of the human life-form: suffering and need The very idea of our having epistemic access to the bad as privation, on an Aristotelian conception of normativity, presupposes Aristotelian metaphysical commitments — the reality of the human life-form, and thus real potential and breached human teleology. Without these presuppositions, the structure of naturalistic normative judgements that index ethical judgements to the human life-form cannot be made out, especially in a negativist form. The second problem now arises of what metaphysical sense, if any, can be made of the concept of an unactualized human lifeform, a radically breached human telos? The problem is this: if the content of a life form is in some way identical with the characteristics that fit into the teleologically structured life cycle by which a thing reproduces (i.e. how things go in the good case), how can it be said that our form is not actualized, that we have no good cases? For it seems as if we do have a life cycle, an actual one, whereby we humans reproduce our kind and have been doing so rather successfully in terms of brute population growth. The unactualized form would then have to refer, apparently, to something other than the life cycle, but then it seems to have no content. The naturalistic normative judgement form would have been abandoned. The challenge is to show how this problem could be overcome: what is this thing, the unactualized teleologically integrated human life cycle, that supposedly grounds naturalistic normative judgements about our current privation though seemingly distinct from our actual life-cycle?

This problem raises the question of the status of suffering and its relation to need. Adorno assumes that while some suffering may not be the appearance of the bad, all badness will be manifest in some suffering, however indirectly. Freyenhagen (2013, 233) broaches this issue when he says- We can ask what licenses the assumption that bearers will 'typically' experience badness as such — in the experience we call suffering? Freyenhagen does not address this issue, but I think we should offer something like the following response:

for humans, at least, natural defects will show up in experience as suffering because such defect is necessarily a violation of some normative necessity that is interconnected with the wider system of necessities or needs (that would be expressed in the system of teleologically connected judgements) that make up the life-form. This means that it is bound to cause disruption and generate internal conflict, and such conflict is registered first-personally in the experience we call suffering. Suffer- ing just is the first personal, subjective appearance of such conflict. But in light of it, what justifies the admission that badness could ever not appear in

experience as such that is, in suffering, forbearers of the human life-form? If there are grounds to think suffering will typically be the subjective manifestation of the bad, as I have suggested, I think this also gives us reason to think that in the human case, the bad will always be manifest in some way in suffering, no matter how indirect. The need is the formal cause of suffering when it is a veridical appearance of the bad: qua appearance of the bad, suffering's formal cause is the need whose frustration it is the consequence of; and frustrated need will always be expressed in some suffering, whether or not veridically.

Now while Freyenhagen's discussion frequently relies on the idea of need, in particular the idea of 'genuine needs' (2013, 31) he leaves the fundamental concept of need, and the question of how its various species — 'genuine' as opposed, presumably, to 'counterfeit'— might be differentiated, unexplained. What must be presupposed for the distinction between genuine (true) and counterfeit (false) needs to make sense? — for it to make sense to attack, for example, the needs people have acquired for cultural industry products as false in themselves? Although Adorno is sceptical of the possibility of our deciding what are and are not false needs, because wrong life makes such judgements very difficult, the very distinction (even as one that is currently difficult to draw) presupposes not only a metaphysical commitment to the reality of the unactualized human life-form but a conception of needs and potentials and the relationship between them.

So, what of a metaphysics of need in general? While needs are typically thought of as needs for, that is, for objects, we should, I shall propose, rather think about needs as essentially needs to, that is, needs to exercise kinds of capacities in kinds of activity. On such a view, objects are needed, but derivatively: as the objects of activity (so that the need for food is derivative of the need to eat, digest, respire, and so on, the need for a lover is derivative of the need to love, and needs for intellectual stimulation or aesthetic satisfaction are derivative of needs to think or feel creatively, etc.). Capacities are also needed, but derivatively: as the necessary condition of our exercising them (if there is doubt that we can need to exercise capacities we don't [yet] have, just consider the motivational structure of acquiring new capacities, that is, of learning to, and bear in mind that it is kinds of capacities we need to exercise, and thus that we need to acquire).

Here we have an idea of non-conflict that perhaps redeems the suppressed truth in Kant's thought that the moral coincides with the non-contradictory but does so in a naturalistic

way the possibility of which Kant could not get into view: it is the absence of real contradiction between a person's needed activities and between persons' needed activities, which would constitute 'the good' — the actualised human form. If this is right, suffering would be the subjective appearance of conflict, such as will occur between false needs, because they are false; their falsity consists in their inevitable conflict, and suffering is the subjective appearance of such conflict. Why should such conflict be thought a priori to result in suffering? Because where needs conflict, they cannot all be met. Suffering is the subjective appearance of frustration, frustration is the inevitable corollary of conflict of needs, and conflict of needs is the inevitable corollary of the societal distortion of genuine needs into false ones. Critical theory aims at elucidating the real, true that is to say, potentially non- conflicting and conjunctively harmonious and self-sustaining needs of human beings. This harmonious co-existence of needs is the ideal to which the concept of true needs is metaphysically different.

Freyenhagen (2013, 234) says- "The purpose of the human life-form is not exhausted in mere survival … to live up to their full potential qua human life-form, they would have to make use of their capacities not only for the survival of their life-form … but also beyond this purpose".

This is a precarious statement. To talk of a life form having a purpose is, it seems to me, slightly off, for it is not that a life form's purpose is survival and reproduction, but rather that it is constituted by such a purpose. A life form can hardly be the appropriate subject to which to attribute a purpose at all. Rather, it is constituted by a purposive system. What it is for a life form to be is that it is a self-reproducing form, and how we make judgements about life forms as such (the grizzly bear, say) is that we attend to which features of its bearers are systematically connected to that 'purpose'. But to say that the life form's purpose is reproducing suggests that the life form is something independent of that purpose, whereas in fact that purpose is constitutive of it. Once this is grasped, it makes little sense to say, as Freyenhagen does, that the human life form has other purposes beyond reproduction. That sort of statement sounds much like, once more, having just said that 'the objective requirements faced by a life-form are indexed to its teleology' (233), the logic of naturalistic normative judgements is now being abandoned and external normative commitments, in the shape of assertions about what other purposes the human life-form has, are being arbitrarily introduced.

What we should say instead is that since the human life form specifies a distinctive kind

of life — not merely appetitive, animal life, but rational life20 — what it means for the human life-form to maintain and reproduce itself is not exhausted by the mere reproduction of ourselves qua animal life. Human reproduction entails the reproduction of rational life. And this is what is lacking in human history so far, in Adorno's view: we are reproducing ourselves only qua mere animal life, merely reproducing self-preservation run wild, so that it is as if history were simply a process of first nature because so far 'second nature is, in truth, first [i.e. animal] nature' (Adorno 2006b, 268).

One of Adorno's most distinctive claims is that we are doing this — avoiding reproducing ourselves as rational animals — through the dominance of our very rationality, albeit a narrow and unreflective form of it that is thereby actually irrational. Presumably, what would constitute human life as reproducing itself qua rational life would be an organization of social life in which the true needs of human beings were reconciled, and actualized, and in which therefore no more fundamental contradictions existed in human life. Another way of putting this is to say that although we have persisted qua animal life, we have not managed to develop ourselves as the rational animals we are, so when we consider human life qua rational life, Kurnberger's 'Life does not live' makes literal sense: we do not live in the sense of 'live' proper to our kind. Moreover, it is not merely that we exist adequately as animals, only not as rational animals. For our nature as rational animals is not constituted by the addition of an extra feature — rationality — to an animal nature that is the same as that of the 'brutes'. Our rational animality permeates our whole animality so our rationality introduces new possibilities for irrationality in our animality. As irrational humans, we are also irrational qua animals.

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