

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Human memory is a marvelous but fallacious instrument. This is a threadbare truth known not only to psychologists but also to anyone who has paid attention to the behavior of those who surround him, or even to his own behavior. The memories which lie within us are not carved in stone; not only do they tend to become erased as the years go by, but often they change, or even grow, but incorporating extraneous features.

- Primo Levi

Memory is a mysterious capacity that slips away from many theoretical attempts to fix its role in human life, but continuous effort is put forth to better understand it because it is so widely, and deeply valued by human beings. We cling to memory as one aspect, or determination of our humanity. For example, for some, the *idea* of suffering from Alzheimer's Disease, or even senility is so terrifying and dehumanizing that they spiral into an irreparable depression, or even consider life unlivable without memory and commit suicide. This harboring of severe anxiety reflects a deep fear of not only memory loss in actuality, but the *idea* of memory loss. The human imagination is so powerful and central to mental processes that it can generate ideas of things not existing in actuality, but present them *as if* really existing, which complicates our concept of what we are remembering when we recollect "a memory."¹ This combination of fear as a pathology,

¹ It is important to insert scare quotes here to caution the reader against assuming that recollection is within one's control, and that memory is a part of consciousness. I will later explain what I mean by remembering.

and memory as an apparatus in constant fluctuation and situated in the unconscious creates an intriguing psychoanalytic problem worthy of investigation. The work that this thesis will do will, in the most general sense, examine the destinies of memory based on human experience as embodied.

Memory is an important theme for many philosophers precisely because of its complex conceptual, psychoanalytical, historical, political, and social implications. The subjects of interest concerning *individual* memory for this thesis include what memory is and how the mental apparatus functions to produce what we know as memories, what it means to say that we “remember” something, how an individual’s memory is manipulated or even occluded, and why we feel an urgency to attribute truth and falsity to memories. On a broader, but not discrete level, questions of historical collective memory important to this thesis include the way in which human individuals as the components of a society produce and reproduce dominant narratives and normative standards of behavior, the way in which they are also products of historical narratives, and how cultural memories, stories told by the dominant group that serve to habituate individual human behavior, produce memory traces that are effective precisely in their unconscious nature. One way to examine these dynamics is to look at the relation between the individual psyche and society, and correlatively consider the relation between individual and collective memory, which this thesis will attempt to do.

Investigating the mutually constitutive relationship between human individual and human collective, and the human mental apparatus and political behavior in concert with a focus on memory’s evasive yet important role in these relations is at times a difficult task to achieve without falling into either essentialist or relativist traps. However, this

thesis will maintain that there are productive conversations to be had that take into account a notion of mental processes that are common to all human beings, which by eliciting the psychoanalytic perspective, does not discount the fact that each human being is both a product and producer of socio-economic conditions. Any resistance to oppressive and destructive historical narratives will take into account these important interrelations, and the horrifying degree to which a manipulated, and at the worst traumatically destroyed memory can make life unlivable.

Finally, this thesis will take up testimony to generate a discussion of human memory in the wake of Auschwitz in terms of passing on narrative in both a preventative and generatively educational way. I will rely heavily on Benjamin's account of the storyteller in *Illuminations*, as well as Primo Levi's *The Drowned and the Saved*. Examining Spinoza's and Freud's accounts of the mental apparatus will serve to inform and contour my discussions of individual and historical trauma and testimony, i.e. I will be examining these topics in light of Spinoza and Freud as foundational authorities on the mind and embodied experience. Overall this thesis will argue in favor of a peculiar kind of communication that values the passing of peculiar human experience between generations, employs dialectical thinking, and emphasizes the importance of questioning cultural memory.

CHAPTER II

THE MENTAL APPARATUS AND MEMORY

This thesis will view memory as an undergoing; an aspect of the totality of the human individual's mental process, and her constant state of becoming. As part of this constant state of becoming, memory has political implications in the sense that it is considered central to human desire, and consequently human action. It is not a fixed container or receptacle that categorizes some things as "remembered" and others as "forgotten" to be brought into consciousness at will. To characterize it as not fixed, or, better, to say that it is *fluid* is also to say that it has no permanency. Something I am said to remember now I may not necessarily recall later, for example we are often reminded of something "forgotten." Similar to Aristotelian *nous*, the sensation is a realization, but of a lack. It is a noticing of absence.² In fact, a consideration of memory necessarily involves a capacity to "forget" or else we could not *re*-member, or literally put back together or reconstruct what we call a memory. Although remembering and forgetting are clearly important to the concept of memory, they are symptomatic of the fluid process at work, and our lack of conscious control over recollection. Remembering and forgetting show the human individual constantly undergoing change with respect to the condition of her body in accordance with the way in which her imagination presents things to her.³

² Presence and absence, and their complicated intertwining will be an important consideration in this thesis since their intersection with respect to memory concerns the particular way in which the imagination presents or *makes things present* to oneself.

³ I will later flesh out what I mean by fluidity as a dialectical proposition, and account for the counter argument that a notion of fluidity, too, can potentially imply an overall

Since Spinoza and Freud are the foundational figures for other discussions in this thesis, it is important to consider their respective views on the mental apparatus or mind, and how it functions. This examination will take the form of accounting for memory's relation to consciousness and the unconscious, and presentation and representation. Spinoza gives the keys to understanding the mind and its relation to memory in *Ethics* in which Spinoza shows how human beings can strive to purify and sharpen their power of intellection or understanding as opposed to being solely bound to affection, which is experienced in the mind via imagination as the idea of an actually existing body. First, it is important to understand what Spinoza means by stating that mind is the idea of body because this is the concept upon which his assertions about memory and imagination as fundamentally connected to adequate and inadequate ideas hinge.⁴

framework that already allows for constant change, and thus nullifies the conceptual effectiveness of fluidity (particularly with respect to memory and history).

⁴ Although I am not giving a full reading of Spinoza's account of God or Nature and its infinite idea in the body of the paper in order to keep our focus on human embodiment, it is important to note that human beings are extensions of God's affection for Spinoza. This is an important aspect of Spinoza's system of modality because it is the foundation for the concept that nothing is outside of or a separate dominion within Nature (or God). Nature and God serve the same function in this line of thought. Spinoza writes, "Thought is an attribute of God, or God is a thinking thing," and furthermore, "Singular thoughts, or this or that thought, are modes that express God's nature in a certain and determinate way" (E IIP1Dem.). God (Nature) can be extended in thought and physical existence in infinitely many ways, hence Spinoza's definition: "By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God's essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing" (E IID1). The human body and thought are modes of God's thinking and extension, and human beings "neither feel nor perceive any singular things except bodies and modes of thinking" (E IIA5). Spinoza constructs human experience as a mode of God's thought and extension in order to both differentiate and bring into conversation God (Nature) as all that is necessary and human beings' essence as not involving necessary existence (E IIA1). Only by coming to an understanding, even an acceptance, of the way in which one proceeds from the necessity of her being can she moderate her affects or passions, and thus enjoy greater freedom. Spinoza writes, "Insofar as the Mind understands all things as necessary, it has a greater power over the affects, or is less acted on by them" (E VP6). Wrongly believing that human beings can will against their

In an effort to deploy and overturn Cartesian mind/body dualism, Spinoza argues that mind is *nothing but* the idea of body: “The object of the idea constituting the human Mind is the Body, or a certain mode of Extension which actually exists, and nothing else” (E IIP13). The mind does not “have ideas” in the common sense that implies that the mind is capable of cogitation severed from the condition of the body, but rather it *is* idea in the sense that the mind forms ideas according to the condition of the body. It is helpful to provide Spinoza’s definitions of body and idea which are as follows: “By body I understand a mode that in a certain and determinate way expresses God’s essence insofar as he is considered as an extended thing,” (E IID1) and, “By idea I understand a concept of the Mind that forms because it is a thinking thing. Exp.: I say concept rather than perception, because the word perception seems to indicate that the Mind is acted on by the object. But concept seems to express an action of the Mind” (E IID3Exp.). Body is therefore a concrete extension or mode of God or Nature, which I would add undergoes constant change in accordance with its increased or decreased activity in response to affection, a point that I will further investigate shortly. Idea is a conceptual formation of the mind that indicates the mind’s capacity for activity, and it “is the first thing that constitutes the being of a human Mind,” but only if it is the idea of the actually existing body (E IIP11Dem.). Spinoza emphasizes that the idea must be of an actually existing body otherwise the idea would not indicate the “being” or actual existence of mind. The idea that first constitutes the human mind must also not be of something infinite, even if

affections, in some sense eliminating or at least neutralizing their power, simply reinforces the influence of the passions. Coming to understand a certain affection as necessary or as not capable of being other than it is, retains one’s connection with reality, which for Spinoza is most perfect: “By reality and perfection I understand the same” (E IID6).

it exists in actuality, because the infinite indicates necessary existence, which does not apply to human beings.⁵ Action and affection are aspects of the same process of constantly becoming, and according to Spinoza we would say that they are different attributes, i.e. we understand the mind's undergoing now under the attribute of action, now under the attribute of affection.

The mind knows neither *itself* nor the body *itself* as extrinsically existing objects upon which it can reflect. The mind does not regard the body *qua* body as an existing entity, as something other than itself, but rather its awareness is of the affections of the body and the ideas of these affections. Spinoza writes, “[T]he idea of the Body and the Body, i.e. (by P13), the Mind and the Body, are one and the same Individual, which is conceived now under the attribute of Thought and now under the attribute of Extension” (E IIP21Schol.). The mind and body as aspects of the same individual perceive affections of both the body and mind, and the ideas of those affections, which make up the attributes of extension and thought respectively.⁶ Spinoza is not speaking of a union that transforms mind and body from two entities into a single entity, nor is he claiming that mind and body are identical, but rather the union or sameness of which he speaks involves mind necessarily arising from bodily affection. Furthermore, his project in using the word “union” is to deploy customary language for the sake of overturning it and giving it a new

⁵ I am not mentioning animals, although they, too, think, desire, and imagine, because I would like to stay focused on the human mental apparatus. But it is worth noting that many of these mental processes are not exclusive to human beings.

⁶ I must state from the outset that to articulate the language of sameness is a difficult task because while in actuality the body is constantly affected and producing affect in others, thus indicating constant fluidity, to set it in language is to make it a fixed concept. Therefore any language employed to define the sameness of body and mind will always slip away. Nevertheless it is worthwhile to attempt to describe this sameness in order to understand the nature of affect.

meaning, not to say that a literal union, collapsing two into one, occurs. Therefore he is referring to the single process of embodied perception, mind and body as *aspects* of the same, not discrete entities.

Opposed to the dualistic notion that active states involve the mind and passive states involve the body, Spinoza engages mind and body in such a way that necessitates that both activity and passivity can arise from a single affect of mind and body as aspects of the same individual. Spinoza works to dismantle the way in which many modern theorists deem body inferior to mind, and maintain mind as the *faculty* that is, by its ability to reason, the sole potential for human freedom.⁷ Spinoza retains the customary terminology, mind and body, but emphasizes body as crucial to human knowledge by upholding its role as the only mode by which human beings exist and experience; human knowledge proceeds and is only possible on the basis of material, embodied sensibility. Spinoza explains the activity and passivity that arises from affection with the proposition: “The actions of the Mind arise from adequate ideas alone; the passions depend on inadequate ideas alone” (E IIP3). The mind as essentially the idea of the individual’s existing body consists of many ideas, some of which are adequate and some inadequate. Inadequate idea simply means partial knowledge, which means that the knowledge we can gain from our embodied experience is specific to that experience. Human beings experience some affects passively, viz. passions because, as Spinoza writes, “We are said to be passive when something arises in us of which we are only the partial cause; that is, something that cannot be deduced solely from the laws of our own nature” (156). A body that affects a human individual and is not common to the individual and the external body

⁷ Some of the work Spinoza’s theory does for this thesis pertains to his effort to dismantle faculty psychology that deems aspects of the mental apparatus as fixed receptacles.

is not determined simply by the nature of the individual's own body. The knowledge of this affect is thus partial, and the individual is passive with respect to the affect. Spinoza writes, "For the idea of an affection of the human Body (by P27) does not involve adequate knowledge of the Body itself, or does not express its nature adequately, i.e. (by P13), does not agree adequately with the nature of the Mind" (E IIP29Dem.). As aforementioned the mind only senses its existence by means of the body's affections, which Spinoza states does not impart full knowledge of the body's nature *per se*, but only partial or inadequate knowledge. Inadequate knowledge stems from an individual's peculiar affection, which involves the individual's body in connection with other bodies. On the other hand, to have an adequate idea is to understand an object as consistent with the necessity of its nature: "By adequate idea I understand an idea which, insofar as it is considered in itself, without relation to an object, has all the properties, or intrinsic denominations of a true idea. Exp.: I say intrinsic to exclude what is extrinsic, viz. the agreement of the idea with its object" (E IID4Exp.). This is the *ideatum*, the true idea, and it will become clearer how we can have a true idea by looking at imagination.

Imagination plays a crucial role in human embodied life, and will be important to understanding many other phenomena under investigation in this thesis, especially memory. Imagination is a mode of thinking, it is an affection of the mind, and in the Appendix to the *Expositor of Descartes*, Spinoza states that "imagining is nothing but being aware of traces found in the brain from the motion of the spirits aroused in the senses by objects" (300).⁸ Imagination functions such that that of which the mind is

⁸ Spinoza's concept of imagining as being aware of "traces" will be supplemented with Freud's discussion of memory traces, thus bringing imagination and memory together in a particular way.

aware when imagining, viz. conceptually prior affections (not necessarily temporally prior) are presented “positively, as beings” existing in actuality (300). The affection and idea of affection that results from being impacted by some external body is not identical with that external body, but since the imagination presents images, human beings have a tendency to confuse the image with an actually existing being. It is for this reason that human beings believe that their imagination is *representing* the idea of a really existing being, but what is really being presented is the image as a result of affection.

It is helpful to revisit Spinoza’s account of affection, now in coordination with imagination, to clarify the previous explanation. Spinoza defines pleasurable and unpleasurable affection thus: “[B]y *Sadness*, [I understand] that *passion by which* [the Mind] *passes to a lesser perfection*. The *affect of Joy which is related to the Mind and Body at once* I call *Pleasure* or *Cheerfulness*, and that of *Sadness, Pain* or *Melancholy*” (E IIP11S). Sadness is a passion, which means that it is affection that results in passivity as opposed to activity, in the sense that affection can increase or diminish one’s power of acting. Moreover, not only direct affection, but the affection of those we love can affect us: “Next, insofar as a thing is affected with Sadness, it is destroyed, and the more so, the greater the Sadness with which it is affected (by P11S). So (by P19) he who imagines what the loves to be affected with Sadness, will also be affected with Sadness, and the more so, the greater this affect was in the thing loved, q.e.d” (Spinoza, E IIP21D). A thing that is affected with sadness is destroyed in the sense that its power of acting is destroyed, but to a varying degree depending on the degree to which one is affected with sadness. In addition, imagining something one loves to be affected with sadness causes one to be affected with sadness, which is an example of how powerfully the imagination

makes things present, i.e. to such a degree that one is genuinely affected by imagining such a thing. By the principle of efficient causality, the nature of one's own body is the extent to which one can be affected in concert with the extent to which one can act in response to affection. The modes of affections of the human body, of which the Mind is the idea, necessarily impact the imagination, which presents the world as existing to the human consciousness. In the case of the imagination, affection arises in response to an image in the mind, which is one kind of inadequate idea, as was previously defined in my discussion of inadequate ideas. Spinoza writes:

Furthermore (from P17C and P16C2), we clearly understand what is the difference between the idea of, say, Peter, which constitutes the essence of Peter's mind, and the idea of Peter which is in another man, say in Paul. For the former directly explains the essence of Peter's body, and does not involve existence, except so long as Peter exists; but the latter indicates the condition of Paul's body more than Peter's nature, and therefore, while that condition of Paul's body lasts, Paul's Mind will still regard Peter as present to itself, even though Peter does not exist (E IIP17S).

Peter's idea of Peter's body does not involve existence because his mind *is* the idea of his body, immediately, and thus a concept of external existence is not involved. Paul's idea of Peter informs Paul's existence insofar as Paul is affected by Peter, thus affecting the condition of Paul's body. This peculiar condition of Paul's body, while persisting, retains the idea of Peter as present since this specific condition of Paul's body stemmed from being affected by Peter. Therefore what we see is the imagination presenting the image of a body as existing, regardless of whether or not Peter is physically present.⁹ Spinoza writes, "If the human Body is affected with a mode that involves the nature of an external body, the human Mind will regard the same external body as actually existing, or as

⁹ This is an example that is also important for understanding a certain kind of loss: melancholy, but this thesis will not go into detail with respect to melancholy despite its relatedness to trauma as another form of loss.

present to it, until the Body is affected by an affect that excludes the existence or presence of that body” (E IIP17). Correlative to the notion that something can only affect one to the extent that one can be affected is that only a stronger affect can replace an existing affect. Until one experiences a stronger affection, the imagination will regard the source of an affect (the external body) as existing or present.

Spinoza also offers the following reason as to why human beings often wrongly rely on their imagination to present that which exists in actuality: “[B]ecause those who do not understand the nature of things, but only imagine them, affirm nothing concerning things, and take the imagination for the intellect, they firmly believe, in their ignorance of things and of their own nature, that there is an order in things” (E IApp.). Human beings attribute an inherent order to Nature, and wrongly assume the authority of will and reason over passion or affect precisely because they are ignorant of the causes of their desires. Spinoza maintains that it is possible to entertain such a mistaken concept via the imagination, since the imagination can make present that which does not really exist. Spinoza goes on to say, “For when things are so disposed that, when they are presented to us through the senses, we can easily imagine them, and so can easily remember them, we say that they are well-ordered; but if the opposite is true, we say that they are badly ordered, or confused” (E IAppx.). Spinoza reveals our tendency to shift in our judgment of things as ordered or disordered depending on the peculiar ease or lack thereof with which we imagine and remember something. Human beings confuse the imagination with the intellect, and thus mistake what they can imagine for that of which they can have true

knowledge.¹⁰ Since imagining order affects one more pleasurably than confusion or disorder, human beings are inclined to imagine orderliness on which they believe they can depend when they lack true knowledge. We then tend to assume that our peculiar affections as individuals can be generalized to all human beings' affection. Instead of acknowledging an affection of the imagination as individual, as "according to the disposition of [one's] brain," human beings tend to cling to their own individual opinions to such a degree as to *believe* that they universally applicable, and are repelled by opposing opinions (E IAppx.). In other words, modes of imagining cause many human individuals to view those affections as actually existing, which convinces them of those affections' ubiquity. To further exemplify this point, Spinoza states that with respect to our bodily sensations, what we call sweet, bitter, soft, hard, etc. based on the organ with which we sense such attributes, "All of these things show sufficiently that each one has judged things according to the disposition of his brain; or rather, has accepted affections of the imagination as things [i.e. as existing in actuality]" (E IAppx.). Thus, Spinoza maintains that human individuals tend to believe that the affections of their imagination are true of nature: "We see, therefore, that all the notions by which ordinary people are accustomed to explain nature are only modes of imagining, and do not indicate the nature of anything, only the constitution of the imagination" (E IAppx.). Spinoza explains that the normative attributes that human beings give to nature result from men having

¹⁰ Thus we see that we can have an adequate idea only when we recognize that our imagination does not present reality. Recognizing this we can then proceed to *judge* whether or not an object is consistent with the necessity of its being, actually exists, and is thus true. Error stems from wrong judgment, not directly from the imagination. Spinoza believes that through acknowledging the way in which our mind is the idea of the affection of the body, and the way in which the imagination presents images, we can come to enjoy greater freedom precisely by understanding that these apparatuses function from the necessity of their being.

convinced themselves that “everything that happens, happens on their account,” and they “rate as most excellent all those things by which they [are] most pleased” (E IAppx.). Having an inadequate idea of their bodies and the causes of their desires, human beings resort to naming themselves the cause of order, and of that which most pleases them. Finally, Spinoza shows that certainty or true knowledge does not follow from affections of the imagination: “[M]en judge things according to the disposition of their brain, and imagine, rather than understand them. For if men had understood them, these things would at least convince them all, even if they did not attract them all, as the example of mathematics shows” (E IAppx.). Mathematics, one of the only things about which human beings can have certainty or an adequate idea, does not rely on pleasurable affection to affirm its truth, thus setting itself in opposition to other inadequate ideas of nature that involve no understanding, but only pleasurable affection of the imagination.

Considering the imagination is important to memory because it is one mode by which human beings recall experience. Spinoza writes:

That there are certain modes of thinking which help us to retain things more firmly and easily, and when we wish, to recall them to mind or keep them present to the mind, is sufficiently established for those who use that well-known rule of Memory, by which to retain something very new and imprint it on the memory, we recall something else familiar to us, which agrees with it, either in name or in reality. Similarly, the Philosophers have reduced all natural things to certain classes, to which they recur when anything new presents itself to them. These they call genus, species, etc. (300).

Memory corresponds to the way in which the human mind orders perceptions based on the affection of its body, and the experience of remembering relies on an association with an imagined image, which in turn produces the associated “remembered” image. Spinoza writes, “If the human Body has once been affected by two or more bodies at the same time, then when the Mind subsequently imagines one of them, it will immediately

recollect the others also” (E IIP18). In response to two or more affections from external bodies occurring at the same time, the mind knows them as associated, and thus when the mind imagines one it also imagines the other by association. This shows the way in which the imagination is subject to the affections of the body, and can present a joint affection when in actuality two external objects are not necessarily associated.

The ordering of images in the mind is peculiar to one’s history of experience, which Spinoza articulates by providing an example: “[A] soldier, having seen traces of a horse in the sand, will immediately pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a horseman, and from that to the thought of war, etc. But a farmer will pass from the thought of a horse to the thought of a plow, and then to that of a field, etc.” (E IIP18Schol.). The connection of thoughts or the ordering of images thus reflects one’s being accustomed or habituated to affection by an actual external body, the idea of which the mind imagines or recalls according to one’s peculiar affection.

Correspondingly, Spinoza considers memory to be “nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human Body—a connection that is in the Mind according to the order and connection of the affections of the human Body” (E P18Schol.). According to Spinoza, when we remember we essentially imagine a connection of ideas or images that we have acquired and to which we have become habituated via affections of the body. Spinoza writes, “Now insofar as we imagine something in relation to past time, we are supposed to imagine something that brings it back to our memory, *or* that arouses the image of the thing, and therefore brings it about that we consider it as if it were present” (E IVP13). When we are said to remember, we are aware of an image that is an idea of a past affection of the body in such

a way that we regard it as present to us. Memory is imagining oriented to past affections, and thus the ideas or images that arise are always inadequate or partial. Moreover, because what we describe as memory can only be the arising of inadequate ideas or images, just as imagining is only inadequate, we could say that to claim that we *remember* is a similar error in judgment to saying that the imagination *represents*. Just as the imagination presents images according to the disposition of the body, and thus does not represent reality, memory presents images in the same way, and thus we do not remember as in correctly or truly reassemble representations of past events in actuality. Memory as always subject to the disposition of the body will present images to the mind according to past affection, and thus one's peculiar memory will never be completely consistent with or identical to someone else's. However, despite the imagination's inability to provide adequate knowledge, and correspondingly memory's inability to do the same, both are important to self-preservation, both are powerfully convincing and motivating forces for human beings, and thus both play an important role in political life, which will later be investigated under the theme of historical trauma.

In order to give a robust account of memory, and particularly what it means to remember, it is helpful to look at Freud's examination of how aspects of the mental apparatus function together in regulating cathexes, and how memory is conceptually situated with respect to other aspects of the mental apparatus, viz. consciousness, the unconscious, and the instinctual apparatus. Freud maintains that the mind is a dynamic apparatus, and at the beginning of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, he explains that the most fruitful exploration of the mental apparatus will take into account the "economic," "dynamic," and "topographical" factors (3). This means examining the overall

arrangement, strength, and place of expended force, or energy, and the way in which “the mental apparatus endeavors to keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to keep it constant” (Freud, *Beyond* 5). In other words the mental apparatus always strives for stability in the form of regulating the excitation from external stimuli and internal affection, which is in the interest of self-preservation. With respect to any “essence” we could attribute to the mental apparatus, it is not merely consciousness, but rather the relation between consciousness and the unconscious. Freud identifies the unconscious as the dark realm in need of illumination: “[O]ur scientific work in psychology will consist in translating unconscious processes into conscious ones, and thus filling in the gaps in conscious perception” (*General* 224). Freud states that the role of psychoanalysis in psychology is to take up and investigate the nature of the unconscious; bringing into awareness that which strives to stay below the conscious register or arises in consciousness in a distorted form. Concerning consciousness Freud writes, “What consciousness yields consists essentially of perceptions of excitations coming from the external world and of feelings of pleasure and unpleasure which can only arise from within the mental apparatus” (*Beyond* 26). What we experience as consciousness is our bodily experience of affection and the ideas of its excitations.¹¹ Freud provides his concept of affectivity in a note to “The Unconscious”: “Affectivity manifests itself essentially in motor (i.e. secretory and circulatory) discharge resulting in an (internal) alteration of the subject’s own body without reference to the outer world; motility, in actions designed to effect change in the outer world” (*General* 128). We

¹¹ This thesis’s concept of conscious experience is of Spinozist origin, stemming from Spinoza’s discussion of experience as the affection of the body with the idea of that affection.

perceive the way in which we are affected from within, i.e. we are aware of our modes of thinking or the affections of our mind such as love, joy, desire, etc., which either increase or decrease our power of acting, as Spinoza argues.

Pleasure and pain are for Freud the foundation of human experience, self-preservation, and maintaining psychic stability. For Spinoza self-preservation is necessarily prior (conceptually) to human flourishing and reflection, and is thus one of the most important topics in the *Ethics*. This is embodied in his definition of the *conatus*: “Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being” (E IIP6). Therefore the language of self-preservation is a language of striving, and furthermore this striving makes up the essence of the being and its potential flourishing. Freud also gives an account of striving in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*: “The most that can be said, therefore, is that there exists in the mind a strong *tendency* towards the pleasure principle, but that that tendency is opposed by certain other forces or circumstances, so that the final outcome cannot always be in harmony with the tendency towards pleasure” (6). The pleasure principle in relation to the reality principle forms the foundation for self-preservation in Freud. Freud writes, “Under the influence of the ego’s instincts of self-preservation, the pleasure principle is replaced by the *reality principle*” (7). Although human beings have an inherent tendency to seek pleasure, pleasure in excess can turn on itself and be destructive instead of beneficial. Therefore in order for the ego to preserve itself, it balances pleasure with the reality principle, which “carries into effect the postponement of satisfaction, the abandonment of a number of possibilities of gaining satisfaction and the temporary toleration of unpleasure as a step on the long indirect road to pleasure” (7). Self-preservation as the consistent thread running through human

existence requires the maintenance of a tension between pleasure and tolerating unpleasure, and since this tension is the foundation of human flourishing, flourishing cannot happen without it.

Self-preservation is also sustained via instinct, which is tied to the imagination. Freud examines the imagination in a different, but related way to Spinoza: “An instinct can never be an object of consciousness—only the idea that represents the instinct. Even in the unconscious, moreover, it can only be represented by the idea. If the instinct did not attach itself to an idea or manifest itself as an affective state, we could know nothing about it” (*General* 126). Instincts as “needs” require an ideational quality, images, in order for the mental apparatus to process them. They only become an object of examination when attached to a certain idea or image that the imagination presents. Freud adds, “Though we do speak of an unconscious or a repressed instinctual impulse, this is a looseness of phraseology which is quite harmless. We can only mean an instinctual impulse the ideational presentation of which is unconscious, for nothing else comes into consideration” (126). Although we conventionally speak of repressed impulses, the implication is that we are always already assuming that the imagination is presenting an *idea* of that impulse to which we can conceptually respond. Freud writes, “The whole difference [between affects and ideas in the unconscious] arises from the fact that ideas are cathexes—ultimately of memory-traces—whilst affects and emotions correspond with processes of discharge, the final expression of which is perceived as feeling” (*General* 127). The difference consists in a retaining versus discharging. Energy retained in the unconscious is discharged consciously as emotion or feeling. As will become evident, a more painful affective expression that is repressed will often discharge itself as anxiety.

The instinctual apparatus is also involved in regulating stimuli, and its primary role is protective: shielding against over-stimulation. Freud warns against conflating “instinct” and a “stimulus (of instinctual origin).” Although physiological stimuli whose source is external to the human body do affect the mental apparatus, they do not affect the mind in the same way as those stimuli of instinctual origin. Freud clarifies the distinction between external stimuli and instinctual stimuli, writing of the latter: “a stimulus of instinctual origin is a ‘need’; that which does away with this need is ‘satisfaction.’ This can be attained only by a suitable (adequate) alteration of the inner source of stimulation” (*General* 85). Instinctual stimuli are internal to human beings, and as such affect them from within, and furthermore can only be satisfied, ultimately, by an internal adjustment.¹² Instinct is also a point of intersection for mental and bodily sensation. With respect to a biological focus, “an ‘instinct’ appears to us as a borderland concept between the mental and the physical, being both the mental representative of the stimuli emanating from within the organism and penetrating to the mind, and at the same time a measure of the demand made upon the energy of the latter in consequence of its connection with the body” (*General* 87). Freud’s statement reflects the way in which mental presentation occurs in virtue of embodiment, and the importance of the instinctual apparatus’s role as a constant energy. Freud calls “the amount of force or the measure of the demand upon energy” the “impetus of an instinct” (*General* 87). Freud maintains that this is the “very essence” of instinct: the impulse to regulate energy expenditure.

The most important protective apparatus, which aids in the process of regulating energy expenditure, is repression. Freud explains, “[T]he essence of repression lies

¹² I understand affection from within as Spinoza’s “modes of thinking,” i.e. desire, joy, sadness, etc.

simply in the function of rejecting and keeping something out of consciousness” (*General* 105). In the case of threatening, purely external stimuli, flight is the “appropriate remedy,” but with instincts “flight is of no avail, for the ego cannot escape from itself” (104). Repression results from an internal shift in focus from pursuing pleasure to avoiding pain (105). The first stage, “*primal repression*,” entails “a denial of entry into consciousness to the mental (ideational) presentation of the instinct,” and the second stage, “*repression proper*,” concerns mental derivatives of the repressed instinct-presentation, or such trains of thought as, originating elsewhere, have come into associative connection with it” (106). These associations, too, are repressed in the same way as the initial ideational presentation, but neither the primal repression nor the repression proper are lost; they remain in the unconscious, and reorganize: “putting forth derivatives and instituting connections” (106). There is not an erasure of the repressed idea, but rather “repression interferes only with the relation of the instinct-presentation to one system of the mind, namely, to consciousness” (106). Freud explains that varying manifestations of the same repressed idea rise up to consciousness, but what he terms the preconscious, an aspect of consciousness, serves as the boundary that prevents those manifestations from entering consciousness, but of course this is not always the case. In fact, the rise of those derivatives of a “primally repressed” idea into consciousness is most revealing for the purposes of the psychoanalytic investigation of neuroses. Freud describes this phenomenon thus: “It is as though the resistance of consciousness against [these derivatives] was in inverse proportion to their remoteness from what was originally repressed” (107). Freud describes a relation of force in which derivatives that are distorted or remote enough from the original instinct idea-presentation are no longer

bound to it in an easily identifiable way, and thus wield less force against which consciousness must resist so that they not enter consciousness. Examining the intersection of instincts' destinies and repression Freud writes:

In the course of things it happens again and again that individual instincts or parts of instincts turn out to be incompatible in their aims or demands with the remaining ones, which are able to combine into the inclusive unity of the ego. The former are then split off from this unity by the process of repression, held back at lower levels of psychological development and cut off, to begin with, from the possibility of satisfaction (8).

When instincts contradict in destiny, some are relegated to a repressive state in the unconscious so that some instincts are satisfied to facilitate the self-preservation of the being, and on the other hand, some are repressed, but for the same purpose of self-preservation. This repression is necessary for sociability, for if everyone followed all of their instincts to gain pleasure, they could not maintain security in the Spinozist sense that all citizens must relinquish some personal freedom, and in this case freedom to pursue every instinctual drive for pleasure, for the sake of greater security.

Having examined the other mental apparatuses that allow for sociability, it is important to consider the unconscious and its relation to consciousness as central to Freud's concept of memory. In general, the functioning of mental processes must be unconscious in order to be effective. Mental processes are necessarily unconscious since they function to regulate cathexes from stimuli in order to maintain stability within the human individual, allowing some, but not all ideas into consciousness. Freud writes, "In psychoanalysis there is no choice for us but to declare mental processes to be in themselves unconscious, and to compare the perception of them by consciousness with the perception of the outside world through the sense-organs; we even hope to extract some fresh knowledge from the comparison" (*General* 121). Consciousness, the ego,

responds to affections stemming from internal excitation in the same way as it responds to external stimulation. “The mental, like the physical, is not necessarily in reality just what it appears to us to be. It is, however, satisfactory to find that the correction of inner perception does not present difficulties so great as that of outer perception—that the inner object is less hard to discern truly than is the outside world” (*General* 121). Since we only have a partial knowledge of our mind and body, and thus do not understand them existing as such, they are difficult to truly understand, but Freud maintains that coming to understand that which is internal to us, that which is precisely *not* alien to us, is easier than coming to know truly those bodies existing outside of our individual body.¹³ Freud’s argument leads into a discussion of memory as an apparatus that we can come to understand, and not only via consciousness. Freud writes:

Consciousness is not the only distinctive character which we ascribe to the process in [the perceptual] system. On the basis of impression derived from our psycho-analytic experience, we assume that all excitatory processes that occur in the *other* systems leave permanent traces behind in them which form the foundation of memory. Such memory-traces, then, have nothing to do with the fact of becoming conscious; indeed they are often most powerful and most enduring when the process which left them behind was one which never entered consciousness (*Beyond* 27).

Memory-traces are remnants of excitation or ideas of affection of the body left in the mental systems. Although we may be said to be aware of recollecting a memory, memories existing in the unconscious affect the expenditure of force in the mental apparatus in such a way as to mold our behavior and judgment by habituation. It is helpful to remind ourselves of Spinoza’s definition of memory on this point: “For [memory] is nothing other than a certain connection of ideas involving the nature of things which are outside the human Body—a connection that is in the Mind according to

¹³ Alienability will be complicated later in this thesis.

the order and connection of the affections of the human Body” (E IIP18S). A memory exists according to the affections of the human body by external objects, and concurrently the mind’s idea of that existing body. Reading Freud in light of Spinoza, memory traces exist without being experienced as memory since, as aforementioned in this paper with the example of Peter, one’s idea of one’s own body as affected by external objects does not consciously involve existence, nor memory as I am adding here. Memory is incorporated into the mind’s idea of body, and therefore is inseparable from the affection of the body. Reverting to the Freudian idiom, what is generally considered to be memory, that which is accessible and capable of recollection at will, is in fact situated in the unconscious.¹⁴

We are aware of “only a small content” in consciousness “at any given moment,” so most of what we term “conscious knowledge” remains in a “condition of latency” most of the time (*General* 117). Moreover, Freud argues based on the consideration of all our possible “latent memories” that denying the existence of the unconscious is nearly impossible (117). Freud also proposes that “consciousness arises instead of a memory-trace,” meaning that “excitatory processes do not leave behind any permanent change in its elements but expire, as it were, in the phenomenon of becoming conscious” (*Beyond* 28). Since memory-traces are situated in the unconscious, once they are recollected into consciousness, the conscious recollection displaces the memory-trace. The memory-trace as a cathexis shifts from something retained to something discharged, so what was a trace situated in the unconscious is discharged and experienced as a recollection.

¹⁴ It would be absurd for me to claim that we are incapable of intellectually prompting a memory, but as will be shown later, what we experience as a prompted memory does not briefly restore the past, but merely imparts information.

This section has sought to provide foundational accounts of the human mind and how it is inevitably tied to affections and experiences of the human body. In the process, it became clear that the imagination is an important, but problematic apparatus. One's imagination is peculiar to her individual, unique embodied experience, and thus stimulates much creativity, but judged as a representation of reality, the imagination becomes a condition for error. Since memory is bound to imagination, memory, too, is a problematic topic. In the next section I will investigate individual trauma as the utter destruction of experience, and thus the capacity to remember the trauma as an experience.

CHAPTER III

INDIVIDUAL TRAUMA

Consciousness serves as the protective force against an overwhelming influx of stimuli, and, as Benjamin asserts, “The threat from these energies is one of shocks” (*Illuminations* 161). Consciousness works to prevent such shocks of the mental apparatus that debilitate or even annihilate its ability to function properly. Benjamin adds, “The more readily consciousness registers these shocks, the less likely they are to have a traumatic effect” (161). Consciousness’s ability to acknowledge and place these shocks indicates that the preconscious system is not screening them and excluding them, due to the fact that they would cause more damage if allowed into consciousness. What I mean is that consciousness either registers shocks, or they are repressed in the unconscious and are manifested in consciousness in a distorted form.

Clearly not all repressed material is trauma, but trauma is precisely destruction at the unconscious level, destroying the *capacity* for experience. The only “experience” left after the event of trauma is an afterlife that haunts the individual, a specter or phantasm. Although the instinctual threshold of which we speak is permeable or porous, thus not a definite line between inside and outside, here we will examine trauma as the complete breakdown of instinctual threshold, and the subsequent over-stimulation that results. Freud writes, “We describe as ‘traumatic’ any excitations from outside which are powerful enough to break through the protective shield [...] There is no longer any possibility of preventing the mental apparatus from being flooded with large amounts of

stimulus” (*Beyond* 33). An instance of trauma, by means of fright but not merely by means of it, overrides an instinctual impulse to internally regulate stimuli registering in consciousness. This overwhelming influx of stimuli forecloses any future experience or working through of the trauma, thus rendering it incomprehensible, incapable of being recounted, and most of all a repeated injury over time. Trauma is not simply shock since “what we seek to understand are the effects produced on the organ of the mind by the breach in the shield against stimuli and by the problems that follow in its train. [But] we still attribute importance to the element of fright. It is caused by lack of any preparedness for anxiety” (*Beyond* 36). Trauma cannot be merely fright or shock in the sense of a shock to which one is capable of reacting and then leaving behind. It is rather shock in addition to lacking the defensive preparedness in the form of mounting anxiety, thus rendering one unprepared for an extreme onslaught of excitation. Freud also explains that anxiety alone cannot cause trauma: “I do not believe anxiety can produce a traumatic neurosis. There is something about anxiety that protects its subject against fright and so against fright-neuroses” (Freud, *Beyond* 11). Anxiety involves the building up of a defense against something dangerous, and thus actually acts against a traumatic neurosis.

In the event of trauma, the mental apparatus is so overwhelmed with excitation that the victim’s capacity for experience, and thus her capacity to locate the moment of trauma, is annihilated. Since one who has suffered a trauma is not capable of recollecting the specific event of trauma, the assessment of dreams is one way in which to access the origin of this neurosis. “The function of dreams in trauma neuroses is not wish fulfillment, but rather these “dreams are endeavoring to master the stimulus retrospectively, by developing the anxiety whose omission was the cause of the traumatic

neurosis” (Freud, *Beyond* 36-37). Sufferers of trauma relive the traumatic instance through dreams, which is contrary to any other dream, which, according to Freud, serves the purpose of wish fulfillment. Since real experience of the trauma is occluded, dreams serve to try to make up for the anxiety that did not protect the individual at the time of the trauma. However, since there is no way to go back and correct the trauma, these dreams will persist, resulting in repeated injury. Freud writes, “[People] think the fact that the traumatic experience is constantly forcing itself upon the patient even in his sleep is a proof of the strength of that experience: the patient is, as one might say, fixated to his trauma” (11-12).¹⁵ Freud indicates that people who think this is a normal dream sequence are grossly mistaken, and that what they interpret as the strength of an experience is in fact the complete negation of experience. Freud argues that patients suffering from traumatic neuroses are more occupied with “*not* thinking of it” (12) in their waking lives, whereas some people think that victims of trauma are preoccupied with the event, indicating that it was an experience, which as we have seen it is not. “[Dreams] thus afford us a view of a function of the mental apparatus which, though it does not contradict the pleasure principle, is nevertheless independent of it and seems to be more primitive than the purpose of gaining pleasure and avoiding unpleasure” (Freud, *Beyond* 37). With trauma comes the occlusion of experience, and thus pleasure and unpleasure are no longer the key focus for the mental apparatus of a trauma victim. In order to *try* to preserve itself amidst this violent influx of stimuli, the mental apparatus is attempting a more primitive, i.e. primary, function. In other words it is trying to regain a protective apparatus with which to resist the flood that is trauma before the trauma occurred, but

¹⁵ Here Freud refers to “traumatic experience,” by which I interpret him to mean the traumatic *event*, since I maintain that the event spells the annihilation of experience.

since this is impossible, the dreams reflect a repeated injury instead of a healing process. Healing requires an ability to experience, and this ability has been occluded with the onset of trauma. Therefore Freud states, “May not dreams, which with a view to the psychical binding of traumatic impressions, obey the compulsion to repeat—may not such dreams occur outside analysis as well? And the reply can only be a decided affirmative” (38). Here, Freud poses the question of what we can consider “beyond the pleasure principle” (38), and trauma, as the destroyer of the subject of experience, as the force that renders the victim unable to concern herself with pleasure in the midst of the repeated injury, seems to be such a phenomenon. Dreams within the context of traumatic neuroses are a slave to the trauma, and incapable of entertaining pleasure or wish fulfillment. I believe that these dreams are “outside analysis” for many reasons, including that any attempt to analyze these kinds of dreams is incapable of generating anything new, anything that indicates the possibility of healing, and thus their incessantly repetitive injury defies generative analysis and healing.

As aforementioned, trauma may be related to compulsive behavior such as the compulsion to repeat, whether it is the attempt at verbally reconstructing the event of trauma, or dreams that bring the victim back to the trauma. The compulsion to repeat, like some neuroses, may be indicative of healthy behavior as well as the behavior of a trauma victim. Freud sees the *healthy* compulsion to repeat as “an expression of the *conservative* nature of living substance” as opposed to “a factor impelling towards change and development” (*Beyond* 43), and tied to the instinctual apparatus: “It seems, then, that an instinct is an urge inherent in organic life to restore an earlier state of things which the living entity has been obliged to abandon under the pressure of external disturbing forces;

that is, it is a kind of organic elasticity, or, to put it in another way, the expression of the inertia inherent in organic life” (*Beyond* 43). Human beings experience pleasure not just from that which is new and different (although there is often a pleasurable response to novelty), but also from identical repetition. Freud uses the example of children who implore their parents to retell the same story in identical form over and over again, and states, “[R]epetition, the re-experiencing of something identical, is clearly in itself a source of pleasure” (*Beyond* 42). Although repetition can be a pleasurable sensation, in order to maintain a balance of energy in the mental apparatus it must at some point meet with the reality principle, otherwise repetition reflects a destructive tendency. Bringing this point into conversation with what we have said concerning trauma, we can see trauma as a manifestation of repetition as self-destructive, and more specifically destructive to subjective experience. Repetition becomes destructive at the moment that the capacity to work through unhealthy neurosis is occluded. It is a regression; just like the child that wants to *hear* the same story over and over, the trauma victim must *tell* the same story over and over.¹⁶

Many theorists problematically view trauma as an experience, and the compulsion to repeat that exists in trauma’s wake as repetition of the experience of an injury. Although I agree that it is possible to re-experience injury for the sake of working through, this possibility cannot be applied to trauma. Cathy Caruth is one such theorist, and the trajectory of her argument is an example of how trauma has been misappropriated with the advent of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. In an effort to define trauma Caruth writes:

¹⁶ In the section on testimony I will give a more robust account of this problem.

[T]he pathology cannot be defined either by the event itself—which may or may not be catastrophic, and may not traumatize everyone equally—nor can it be defined in terms of a *distortion* of the event, achieving its haunting power as a result of distorting personal significances attached to it. The pathology consists, rather, solely in the *structure of its experience* or reception: the event is not assimilated or experienced fully at the time, but only belatedly, in its repeated *possession* of the one who experiences it. To be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event (4-5).

Caruth's argument that a certain event "may not traumatize everyone equally," is troubling because it implies that trauma is subject to degrees of severity. I would adjust her statement to say that an event may not *affect* everyone equally, which allows for a certain event to result in trauma for some and not for others. Trauma either occurs or does not; it does not consist in degrees of intensity. Whether or not a human individual suffers trauma depends on the unique extent to which she is affected by an extreme influx of stimuli. Given that I maintain that an influx of stimuli has a determinate possibility for one of two outcomes—trauma or not trauma—I argue that the pathology that is the afterlife of a traumatic event does not indicate a structure of experience, but rather the lack thereof. I agree with Caruth that trauma is a kind of possession of the victim in the sense that trauma strips the human individual of her capacity to be a subject of experience, but to grant trauma a structure, let alone to call it experience is absurd. It would be more fitting to say that trauma introduces a kind of chaos in the mental apparatus that permanently debilitates its power to regulate cathexes. The mental apparatus's inability to properly function is the reason for its inability to work through the injury, and it perversely repeats the injury as a result.

Another point of concern is Caruth's explanation of trauma's resistance to healing, and she, too, looks at Freud's description of traumatic dreams as not oriented toward wish fulfillment. She writes:

The returning traumatic dream startles Freud because it cannot be understood in terms of any wish or unconscious meaning, but is, purely and inexplicably, the literal return of the event against the will of the one it inhabits. Indeed, modern analysts as well have remarked on the surprising *literality* and nonsymbolic nature of traumatic dreams and flashbacks, which resist cure to the extent that they remain, precisely, literal (5).

Although the dream of the trauma does inflict an injury, and it is not within the scope of the victim's choice to prevent it, it is problematic for Caruth to simultaneously assert that the dreams resulting from trauma are completely literal, and that traumatic dreams have no symbolic element. Caruth fails to recognize that the literal is not the opposite of the symbolic, but rather the literal and the symbolic both appeal to reality. Although some might argue that the symbolic's relation to reality is not apparent, nevertheless the symbolic is intended to be a *representation* of that which exists in actuality. Additionally, to argue that the dreams are utterly literal is to say that they correspond to reality, which is incorrect because *inadequate*¹⁷ ideas, whether in waking state or in dreams, are a product of the imagination, which does not provide representations of reality, but rather ideational presentations that are peculiar to the individual. One might ask why those ideas formed in the afterlife of trauma (whether in waking or dreaming state) are inadequate. Since I maintain that in the event of trauma the subject of experience is annihilated, this means that there exists no text, no experience relating to actuality, for the victim to mentally represent. The victim is unable to relate to the onset of trauma as a *past experience*, and instead all that remains, and persists, is a specter, a phantasm of the

¹⁷ Spinoza: "Most of those who have written about the Affects, and men's way of living, seem to treat, not of natural things, which follow the common laws of nature, but of things which are outside nature. Indeed they seem to conceive man in nature as a dominion within a dominion. For they believe that man disturbs, rather than follows, the order of nature, that he has absolute power over his actions, and that he is determined only by himself" (E III Pref.).

event, which obviously does not correspond to reality. Therefore, the nightmare of the event will not be a representation of reality, and thus it will be neither literal *nor* symbolic, regardless of the horrifying and real way in which the victim is affected.

Having examined individual trauma, I would like to turn to historical trauma and look at the ways in which human individuals participate in historical trauma as a severe distortion of perception and memory.

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL TRAUMA: “THE STORY”

The purpose of this section is to investigate historical trauma, and the conditions that allow for it to occur. By historical trauma or the trauma of cultural memory I understand the habituating of a group of human individuals as part of society to certain narratives and ways of life that ultimately distort or even occlude cultural memory, strip human individuals of subjectivity insidiously, and relegate history exclusively to the past, i.e. as not living or functioning in the present. An important point is that human individuals are habituated to these narratives and ways of life, which means that they do not develop them by nature. Nevertheless the evolution is made to appear as if by nature, not by convention, which allows for it to remain concealed from awareness, and thus persist more forcefully. It is therefore a distortion existing unconsciously, which is what it shares with individual trauma. It is the violent expropriation and re-appropriation of a group of human individuals that strips them of subjectivity, and thus their claim to being subjects of experience. Meanwhile those in authority assume sole subjectivity, and make a claim on history, as if such a real claim could be made. They do the “remembering,” they say, “We will remember *for you*,” while the others internalize this “memory,” *oblivious* to the distortion at work.¹⁸

¹⁸ The notion of oblivion comes from Benjamin, particularly his description of the angel of history:

The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly

This thesis is taking up the complex relation between human individuals and society, and the way in which they are mutually constitutive and generative. But this interrelation in itself must be expounded. Some theories uphold Nature as the superstructure under, and apart from which human “devices” such as society, economic conditions, and history function. I want to dismantle this hierarchical structure, and instead argue that nature, society, economic conditions, and history are all aspects of the same material existence for human beings, and therefore when I speak of society, nature, or economic conditions, and the attributes we give them, I am speaking in light of the fact that each is always already an aspect of the same from the human perspective.¹⁹ All that we can possibly perceive and conceive about reality is from the human perspective, and from this perspective the natural and the socio-political as historical are always already aspects of the same since human beings preserve their existence best in the security of society.²⁰ Although the human as individual must be considered amidst these material conditions, neither the human individual nor human beings organized into society are a dominion segregated from nature; society is not distinguished from nature, and one does not solely produce or reproduce the other. In addition, the mutual constitution between human individuals and nature dispels the notion that human beings have a Cartesian will

propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress (257-258). A notion of “progress,” an urge to push forward as if what the future holds is better, requires that society not conceive of any “progress” up until the present, but remain focused on the future as potential “progression,” and are propelled forward. In the process they are oblivious to history as living in the present, and thus view it as a pile of debris from which they must move on.

¹⁹ I rely on Spinoza’s definition of attribute: “By attribute I understand what the intellect perceives of a substance, as constituting its essence” (E ID4). Attributes are qualities of human origin/naming.

²⁰ Spinozist origin. Also see Maimonides’s *The Guide of the Perplexed*, Part II, Chapter 40.

that allows them to move freely with respect to nature, and thus move independently of and utterly dominate nature. To *not* be a dominion within a dominion is precisely to be political, to engage with all of these aspects of the same existence as necessary for the human drive to preserve oneself, and to be oriented toward the ultimate goal of flourishing. So why do human beings struggle with this idea of political engagement, and why do they instead show a tendency toward dichotomizing and setting into opposition nature on one side, and history and society on the other? For many theorists including Marx, Benjamin, and Adorno, who are of particular interest to this thesis, it is evident that the separation of nature and history as the condition of modernity is in the background of their discussions of modern industry and technology. The human drive to dominate nature, and, as Marx traces in *Capital*, the posterior human drive to dominate other human beings, requires the separation of humanity or human history and nature; otherwise even entertaining the thought of either aforementioned kind of domination would be absurd, or, more likely, would never arise at all. In other words, the alienation of material human bodies from material conditions arises from the notion that nature is a material resource to be dominated by human beings that wield “free will” in the Cartesian sense. This in turn allows for the human individual to consider herself separate and privileged, and thus enables her to reduce other human beings to objects, not subjects with whom she senses intersubjectivity.²¹ It is this instrumental rationality, this capacity to see nature and human beings as merely *commodities*, that sets the stage for the

²¹ The Cartesian dualism between mind and body that positions mind as a controlling and willing force, is constantly in the background of any discussion of the separation of human history and nature.

examples of historical trauma that will be discussed, viz. the process of capitalism and Auschwitz.²²

The alienation of material bodies from material conditions is fundamental to alienated consciousness, and narratives that by habituation persist over time.²³ Furthermore, as Adorno maintains, “Coupled with the subject’s historic enthronement as a mind was the delusion of its inalienability” (*Negative* 369). Not only has society invested in the mind as a transcendent power, but doing so also led them to believe that they possess a power to will as a subject that can be neither alienated nor objectified. Although modernity has evolved in such a way as to facilitate human beings objectifying each other, all the while each individual mistakenly believes that her subjectivity cannot be alienated or objectified. Apparatuses of habituation such as ideology and prejudice serve to alienate, to isolate and constrain one’s awareness of and receptiveness to interrelations among human individuals, and the conditions in which we live. One may even be aware of some cultural ideologies, such as religion, and yet not acknowledge the way in which one’s behavior is insidiously habituated by that ideology. A certain story or narrative that is repeated over time often serves to cement prejudices, superstitions, and ideologies so that they function as if they are one’s own memories of experience, and thus resist change. What is situated in the unconscious as bias or prejudice is manifested in consciousness as one’s own memory; the memory is experienced as “yours.”

²² As Adorno and Horkheimer state, “Technical rationality today is the rationality of domination. It is the compulsive character of a society alienated from itself” (*Dialectic* 95).

²³ Alienation is two-fold: it is a state of isolation, and it is the process of making strange or other.

The narrative's source is those who are dominant, and have the power to set the discursive trend, giving history the semblance of a certain trajectory.²⁴ Those who are determining the historical narrative and impressing it on other human individuals and their memory often do not realize that the story they tell is informed by their peculiar embodied experience as human individuals. On the contrary, history books claim a kind of objectivity and accuracy that renders individual stories "subjective," in the sense of *untrustworthy*, and thus obsolete. There is a prejudice toward storytelling; Western culture has gradually become habituated to judging or evaluating storytelling as insufficient for communicating between generations of human beings, while in actuality it is what we need the most.

Stories have both a negative and a positive potential. I have already discussed the way in which certain forms of repetitive storytelling may be symptomatic of individual trauma, and I will take up oppressive narratives by looking at historical trauma shortly. But first, I would like to consult Benjamin's essay, "The Storyteller," which sheds light on constructing a story in a positive way, viz. to communicate as subjects of experience, and how this kind of story has fallen in value. In the wake of alienated consciousness, Benjamin explains that now, "[m]ore and more often there is embarrassment all around when the wish to hear a story is expressed" (83). Benjamin's statement reveals how modern human individuals have been habituated to stories: they are affected by stories in such a way as to feel embarrassment, which reflects the prejudice that stories are only for children. We have been habituated so thoroughly that our immediate reaction to stories is

²⁴ I am not arguing that there *is* an inherent teleology to human history, but rather I am claiming that certain narratives create the *appearance* of a naturally determined trajectory or teleology.

to repel them, which further alienates individual human consciousnesses from each other. In addition, Adorno writes, “Today, self-consciousness no longer means anything but reflection on the ego as embarrassment, as realization of impotence: knowing that one is nothing” (*Minima* 50). Self-reflection, the basis of subjective experience, has been degraded to a matter of noticing one’s own insignificance, the meaninglessness of one’s own desires, wishes, and experiences. It is the ego aware of itself, but only as lacking, similar to the experience of remembering something forgotten. It is as if she suddenly remembers what she has forgotten: that she is a human individual with peculiar desires and dispositions, coupled with the guilt imposed on her from outside herself that that is something of which to be ashamed. It is “better” to be perfectly rational, but individuals remain unaware that this mentality is self-destructive.

With the habituation to being repelled by stories, we have all but lost the capacity to tell our own stories. Benjamin writes, “It is as if something that seemed inalienable to us, the securest among our possessions, were taken from us: the ability to exchange experiences” (83). A widespread investment in the notion of “progress” has brought with it the leaving behind of stories and subjective experience, and the privileging of “objective” data instead. Benjamin’s claim aligns itself with Adorno’s aforementioned claim in that both highlight the fact that human individuals never realized that their capacity to act out their subjectivity, i.e. to communicate their experiences, could be alienated, and ultimately annihilate their capacity to communicate subjective experience. Documentation in effect stands in for communicable experience. Benjamin writes, “Was it not noticeable at the end of the war that men returned from the battlefield grown silent—not richer, but poorer in communicable experience? What ten years later was

poured out in the flood of war books was anything but experience that goes from mouth to mouth” (84). With the end of World War I came an onslaught of soldiers who had suffered trauma, and thus could not communicate their experience, but this was not the only violence that occurred. Benjamin’s intriguing contribution is that not only sudden instances of trauma, but also the overall structure of the war contributed to a shocking deterioration in communicability. Benjamin brings these two factors into conversation thus:

For never has experience been contradicted more thoroughly than strategic experience by tactical warfare, economic experience by inflation, bodily experience by mechanical warfare, moral experience by those in power. A generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body (84).

Benjamin interweaves individual and historical trauma, showing the way in which experience, and the capacity to communicate experience, has become devalued. Every aspect of the war contradicted both a general valuing of communicable experience, and also the individual claim to being a subject of experience. The mechanistic propulsion of the war eliminated any need for individual strategy, fighting, and moral responsibility—basically the need for the soldiers to judge and choose whatsoever. Every decision, movement, tactic was *automatically* decided for the soldiers.²⁵ Benjamin stresses the historical trauma that took place by describing the violent change that an entire generation of people endured, rendering their former modes of life unrecognizable. Amidst this rapid and violent change was the “fragile human body,” which could not

²⁵ This appeals to Benjamin’s description of the “automaton.”

survive the overwhelming influx of mental and physical stimulation and violence unscathed.

The modern form that the story has assumed is the novel, which takes up a completely different project from the story, particularly, for the purpose of this thesis, with respect to human memory and the interrelation among human individuals. Memory plays an important part in storytelling because, as Benjamin states, “[t]he listener’s naive relationship to the storyteller is controlled by his interest in retaining what he is told” (97). The listener’s primary concern is to be able to reproduce the story she is told, to impart the knowledge she gains from the story to others, which is the generative function of a story. But even when one retells a story that one has heard, it takes on slight adjustments based on the listener’s peculiar interpretation according to the way in which the story *affects* her. Benjamin writes:

Memory creates the chain of tradition which passes a happening on from generation to generation. It is the Muse-derived element of the epic art in a broader sense and encompasses its varieties. In the first place among these is the one practiced by the storyteller. It starts the web which all stories together form in the end. One ties on to the next, as the great storytellers, particularly the Oriental ones, have always readily shown. In each of them there is a Scheherazade who thinks of a fresh story whenever her tale comes to a stop (98).

Memory as the epic faculty preserves happenings down through generations while allowing for the variety of ways that those happenings are communicated. The kind of memory elicited for storytelling involves communicating experiences that are peculiar to the individual’s interpretation, creating a line of stories each of which individually occupies a smaller scope of significance or occupies a different mode than that of the novel. The novel, “the perpetuating remembrance of the novelist” dedicates itself to “*one* hero, *one* odyssey, *one* battle,” whereas stories, “short-lived reminiscences of the

storyteller,” communicate “many diffuse occurrences” (Benjamin, 98). While the novelist strives to convey the “meaning of life,” which Benjamin maintains is “the center about which the novel moves,” the storyteller tries to provide counsel, but only within the bounds of her own experience. It is this effort to provide overarching meaning on the part of the novelist *and* the historian that ultimately distorts history and experience instead of affirming it by universalizing and forgetting the uniqueness of human individuals. The universality of the novel is a subsumption of the difference of human beings into an identity—truth is one, identical, but transmissibility is numerous, involving many individual human beings.

The other important difference between the story and the novel is that the story encourages communication among human individuals as subjects of experience whereas the novel alienates the reader, which on a broader scale reflects the increasing alienation of human bodies and consciousnesses that has developed with modernity. Benjamin writes, “A man listening to a story is in the company of the story-teller; even a man reading one shares this companionship. The reader of a novel, however, is isolated, more so than any other reader” (100). The story, whether heard or read, strives via the voice of the storyteller to transmit a peculiar experience, and this project assumes a reader that is a subject of experience, who can benefit from the sharing of experience. Although many stories have morals, stories do not attempt to provide universal meaning to human life as novels do, to claim a kind of authority over meaning that does not actually exist, but rather they portray what a human individual has learned from her own experience. I maintain that what gives a storyteller breadth, i.e. the ability to tell stories that appeal to other individuals’ life experiences, is that the storyteller’s embodied experience always

includes other human individuals.²⁶ However, as the capacity to tell stories, to transmit experience, has fallen in value the prevalence of oppressive narratives, and confused and distorted views of history has grown rapidly.

The historical tendencies aforementioned are the backdrop for our first example of historical trauma or the trauma of cultural memory: the process of capitalism.²⁷ Capitalist power relies on the appearance of a natural “progression,” which is in reality a conventional habituation to new forms of production. This “progression” masks a violent expropriation and traumatic re-appropriation of the workers’ identities. Marx’s description of the expropriation of “the great mass of the people from the soil” as forming the “pre-history of capital,” functions to show that capitalism’s striving toward growth cannot begin until the way in which individuals identify themselves has been transformed, and the memory of a former identity foreclosed. The destruction of this memory is entailed in distorting the workers’ conception of the historical evolution of capitalism. What occurs does not look like the erasing of alternative forms of life because capitalism’s development appears natural, i.e. necessary, and if the workers recognized this phenomenon for what it is: a habituation to convention, it would render capitalism as a mode of human exploitation blatantly oppressive, and thus induce revolution. To help clarify this point, Adorno emphasizes that the “objectivity of historic life is that of natural history,” (*Negative* 354) which reflects Marx’s argument in *Capital* that, although the capitalists play a major role in the exploitation of labor, they, like the proletarians are part of a working economic class system that has laws according to which it functions and

²⁶ Spinozist origin.

²⁷ By the “process of capitalism” or the “capitalist process” I mean the historical evolution of capitalism that occurred by means of expropriating agricultural workers from the land and forcedly re-appropriating them to the proletarian working class.

grows. Therefore, although there are individual human lives at stake, it is nearly impossible to blame or charge one individual with the responsibility of this economic process. This is why it is easy to fall into a deterministic reading of Marx, but what appears to be a law of nature is really only a law that promotes the success of the capitalist process. “The so-called law of nature that is merely one of capitalist society, after all, is therefore called ‘mystification’ by Marx” (Adorno, *Negative* 354). The law by which capitalist accumulation occurs has been abstracted into a law of nature because of the belief that the economic conditions cannot be other than they are. Furthermore, Adorno writes:

That law is natural because of its inevitable character under the prevailing conditions of production. Ideology is not superimposed as a detachable layer on the being of society; it is inherent in that being. It rests upon abstraction, which is of the essence of the barter process. Without disregard for living human beings there could be no swapping. What this implies in the real progress of life to this day is the necessity of social semblance. Its core is value as a thing-in-itself, value as ‘nature.’ The natural growth of capitalist society is real, and at the same time it is that semblance (*Negative* 354).

The law of accumulation is natural only *under* the dominant form of production; it is not natural *per se*. The ideological abstraction of this law does not come to human society from the outside, but rather is produced and constitutes human individuals from within society. Capitalism relies on both a real natural development, and semblance simultaneously. Adorno shows that abstraction and semblance are central to the success of capitalism because without it we could not distance ourselves enough to exchange human beings *as* value. The abstracted value about which capitalism turns is in fact the exploitation of human labor. But, as previously explained, the semblance or appearance of a separation between society and nature, the abstraction of society from nature, creates

the space or distance physically and in consciousness to allow human beings to commodify each other.

Focusing on this semblance of naturalness with respect to the workers' perception of history shows us that their perception is affected in such a way that the transition from work bound to the land to working in factories seems natural, i.e. necessary. Marx writes, "The advance of capitalist production develops a working class which by education, tradition, and habit looks upon the requirements of that mode of production as self-evident natural laws. The organization of the capitalist process of production, once it is fully developed, breaks down all resistance" (899). As a fully developed automaton,²⁸ the capitalist process dismantles all resistance because it naturalizes the laws of its formation, making it appear necessary, as aforementioned. The working class internalizes this process as natural even though their knowledge of it is acquired by conventional modes of habituation, viz. education and tradition. Furthermore, a complex system of reification distorts the workers' perception of their real material existence.²⁹ Marx writes:

Even if we consider just the *formal* relation, the *general* form of capitalist production, which is common to both its more and its less advanced forms, we see that the *means of production*, the *material conditions of labour*, are not subject to the worker, but he to them. Capital *employs* labour. This in itself exhibits the

²⁸ This term is Benjamin's:

The story is told of an automaton constructed in such a way that it could play a winning game of chess, answering each move of an opponent with a countermove. A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hand by means of strings. One can imagine a philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called "historical materialism" is to win all the time. It can easily be a match for anyone if it enlists the services of theology, which today, as we know, is wizened and has to keep out of sight (253).

²⁹ Particularly of the economy, the workers' role in it, and the relationships that constitute this kind of production.

relationship in its simple form and entails the personification of things and the reification of persons (1054).

Marx emphasizes that capitalism, whether in an advanced form or not, relies on a complete inversion of the attributes and value we place on relationships and things. What we observe is that capitalism becomes the subject and the worker becomes the object. Capital does not employ unique *persons*, but rather it employs the bodies only as objects that can repetitively complete factory work. The worker does not use production to enhance her economic power, but rather she is merely another mechanical part in the process of capitalism's self-perpetuation. Thus inhuman materials and processes are personified and become subjects, and human individuals are forcefully appropriated into objects, the *stuff* of capitalist production. Bringing together the language of the appearance of naturalness and reification Marx writes, "In capital, as in money, certain *specific social relations of production between people* appear as *relations of things to people*, or else certain social relations appear as the *natural properties of things in society*" (1005). Human beings' domination of nature transforms into a domination of human over human with the advent of fully developed capitalism. Capitalism allows for the "personification of things" and the "reification of persons" because the naturalization of the laws peculiar to capitalism's development in turn naturalizes or necessitates the relations and attributes peculiar to its development. The laws, relations, and attributes of capitalism are all of human origin, and are thus conventional and arbitrary, but they are made to appear as if by nature, as if some force outside of human control determined them.

This distorted perception is responsible for hiding oppressive domination from both the capitalist and the worker.³⁰ The participants in capitalism view their social relations as natural under what they consider certain naturally constitutive laws of social life, which hides the direct relation of domination at work to both the capitalist and the worker, and overlooks the fact that the worker is alienated from her product (she does not own the property). Labor, although “first of all, a process between man and nature,” (*Capital*, 283) becomes a necessarily social undertaking, although the relations are clouded by the thorough alienation and reification at work. Marx writes:

The particular course taken by our analysis forces this tearing apart of the object under investigation; this corresponds also to the spirit of capitalist production. Here the worker finds the instruments of labour existing independently of him as another man’s property, hence economy in their use appears, from his standpoint, to be a separate operation, one that does not concern him, and therefore has no connection with the methods by which his own personal productivity is increased (443).

Alienation of the worker from her product, from the means of production, and from other workers represses the worker’s awareness of her direct involvement in economy, and of the exploitative method of lengthening the part of the working day dedicated to accumulating surplus-value. The workers “enter into relations with the capitalist, but not with each other. Their co-operation only begins with the labour process, but by then they have ceased to belong to themselves. On entering the labour process they are incorporated into capital. As co-operators, as members of a working organism, they merely form a particular mode of existence of capital” (451). The relationship between the worker and the capitalist is internal to the system, and constituted by it. What we see

³⁰ It should be noted that the capitalist is not a *person* in the sense of a unique human individual. Persons are also appropriated into capitalism to fill the *role* of the capitalist, which is specific to capitalist production.

is the annihilation of intersubjective relations between individuals, viz. two individual agential subjects entering an agreement. Involvement in capitalism is involvement par excellence: the identities of the worker and capitalist come from individual subjects who, upon entering this productive process, are consumed by it. Thus the relations that exist in the capitalist process are necessarily a product of having entered the process. While one should not completely do away with a concept of individuality, because without it one loses the element that makes any kind of relation possible (even a mechanistic relation), the only individuality that exists is according to specific roles within the capitalist process, the sociality specific to the process.

Capitalism's characteristics mirror those of the world of the novel. Referring back to Benjamin on stories, stories of unique personal experience are not valued in the industrial economy, only the capacity to repeat a factory function given to the individual from an external authority. There is no room for idiosyncrasy. Moreover, individuals are not encouraged to relate to each other as they do in storytelling, but rather they only enter into a relationship with the "capitalist," which is not a human being but a mechanical role. Western ideology has evolved in such a way as to value systematic sameness, and the subsuming of individual persons under abstracted roles that become their social identity. Capitalism is an important constitutive and proliferating force for this ideology, which is its conventional aspect, but as Adorno states, capitalism also has an element of real natural development. Some may argue that claiming that capitalism has an aspect to it that is naturally developed negates the possibility that it is a form of historical trauma. Allowing the space for any kind of natural development may detract from the claim that capitalism is an *event* of historical trauma since an event in this sense seems to imply an

occurrence that stands apart from natural historical development. Thus some may think that the capitalist process lacks the specificity and definition to count as an identifiable event of historical trauma. However, I maintain that it is destructive to look at historical trauma as purely a gap or isolated event, which implies that there is a return to a “normal” state. Historical trauma is rather an identifiable event, but only insofar as it constitutes an utter transformation of a way of life for a group of individuals. I believe the afterlife of historical trauma can be characterized as a repeated injury, an incessant repetition that lies in the unconscious and drastically decreases the possibility of reflecting on the event in a way that does not simply perpetuate the trauma.

It is also more difficult to make a case for capitalism being an instance of trauma than, for example, Auschwitz, which will be discussed shortly, since capitalism seems to be a social adjustment to changing economic conditions as opposed to the overt physical and mental violence of Auschwitz. Of course, I am arguing that capitalism may be considered a unique event of historical trauma. This process is a trauma and not another form of violence because its existence relies on the annihilation of the memory of an alternative form of life, and the stripping workers of their subjectivity. What I mean is that the workers, and the capitalist for that matter, do not enter the capitalist process from outside of it as subjects of experience wielding the agency to choose to do so. Identity as connected to one’s work medium becomes the vehicle for the trauma given that it is necessary to break the workers’ identification with working the land for the sake of capitalism’s growth. Expropriation requires the concurrent compulsion of the agricultural workers to the proletarian working class, and in order to ensure a complete transformation, the memory of an alternative form of life must be destroyed. That unique

human persons are forced to enter a system of production that replaces their concrete individuality with an abstracted role, thus eliminating their claim to subjectivity, indicates a thorough and insidious dehumanization that is irreparable. A way of life for an entire generation of agricultural workers was not altered, but *transformed* forever.

By looking at another event of historical trauma, Auschwitz, we can see historical trauma at its most extreme degree, but also see some of the same habituations and ideologies inherent in its prehistory that also form the prehistory of capitalism, and help justify capitalism as a form of historical trauma. In fact, capitalism as responsible for reifying human persons by consuming them into a completely industrial, instrumental rationality was a crucial component in the conditions that yielded severe anti-Semitism, and ultimately Auschwitz. Never in human history has mechanical orientation, and the severance of human society from nature resulted in such a monstrous, cold, and deliberate act of violence: the “administrative murder of millions” (Adorno, *Negative* 362). As Adorno states, “Genocide is the absolute integration. It is on its way wherever men are leveled off—‘polished off,’ as the German military called it—until one exterminates them literally, as deviations from the concept of their total nullity” (*Negative* 362). Since the goal of society today is absolute sameness, “[t]hat all men are alike is exactly what society would like to hear,” (Adorno, *Minima* 103) any difference sticks out like a thorn that must be filed down, or cut off. This effort persists to the extent that any difference that cannot be nullified spells the extermination of an entire genus of human beings. Adorno writes, “[Society] considers actual or imagined differences as stigmas indicating that not enough has yet been done; that something has still been left outside its machinery, not quite determined by its totality” (*Minima* 103). A machine

functions by the coordination of specific parts that have determined roles, and if a part exists that has one extra protrusion, one thing out of place, it causes the entire machine to malfunction or even fail to function. Anything not yet consumed by the totality of this mechanistic society must be forcefully integrated, whether the differences that constitute its falling outside of the machinery are imagined or real. As Spinoza would argue, the imagination functions so as to present things *as if* they actually exist, regardless of their actual existence, and thus these differences, regardless of their reality, produce real affections that motivate integration. A mechanistic process is insatiable; it strives toward a perverse perfection that, in the case of human beings that can never be absolutely the same resorts to eliminating those deviating bodies. To entertain a notion of a utopian absolute human equality is to enforce a “melting-pot” mentality that subsumes all difference. Equality in society today is actually a dangerous absolute integration. Adorno states, “The melting-pot was introduced by unbridled industrial capitalism,” (*Minima* 103) which establishes a fundamental connection between capitalism as one event of historical trauma that so forcefully established a melting-pot mentality, and Auschwitz as an extreme relapse into this barbarism.³¹

What formed the prehistory of Auschwitz is the same alienation of human bodies and consciousnesses from each other that propelled capitalism. The cultural manifestation of this particular alienation of consciousness is anti-Semitism, which is the topic Adorno and Horkheimer take up in *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Although my focus is Auschwitz as the ultimate catastrophe, the most extreme example of historical trauma, violent anti-Semitism was the necessary precursor to the disaster. As has been mentioned, individual

³¹ I derive the idea of Auschwitz as a relapse from Adorno.

human persons' experiences have nothing to do with this development. Adorno and Horkheimer write, "When the masses accept the reactionary ticket containing the clause against the Jews, they are obeying social mechanisms in which individual people's experiences of Jews play no part[...]Experience is replaced by cliché, the imagination active in experience by diligent acceptance" (*Dialectic* 166). Individual subjects of experience that communicate unique experiences have no place in anti-Semitism—the significance of a person's relationship with a Jewish person is annihilated. I say annihilated and not fades or decreases in value because the rapidity with which one can consider a Jewish person to be a friend, a fellow human person one moment, and utterly surrender to objectifying her to seeing her as a *parasite* the next, is so fast that it is undetectable to one's awareness. The "imagination active in experience" is connected to the peculiarity of corporeal existence in a way that an imagination merely presenting abstracted, "authority" informed ideas to itself as if they are natural laws does not. Although the imagination is undoubtedly a source of error for human beings, it is also a source of the unique perspectives that come forth in storytelling. Just as the "imagination active in experience" and storytelling are discredited in favor of "diligent acceptance," so memory, too, is a suspicious apparatus for the transmission of history. Adorno writes, "Memory is tabooed as unpredictable, unreliable, irrational" (*Minima* 122). Because rationality is now industrial, mechanistic, and has been perversely divorced from human passions and emotion, memory as tied to the imagination, which functions based on one's peculiar disposition, falls in value as a reliable mode of transmitting history. "It is true that the objective meaning of knowledge has, with the objectification of the world, become progressively detached from underlying impulses" (Adorno, *Minima* 122).

Knowledge that is honored as reliable and rational is precisely that which is severed from human desire, and any association with desire spells its discredit. Therefore, any subjective account or story that a human individual offers is destined to fall aside as unreliable.

Furthermore, the imagination helps connect human individuals with each other in the form of conscience, which is necessarily connected to “underlying impulses.” Adorno and Horkheimer write, “[C]onscience consisted in the self’s devotion to something substantial outside itself, in the ability to make the true concerns of others one’s own. This ability involves reflection as an interpenetration of receptivity and imagination” (164). Conscience is the imagination making present others’ concerns as if existing as one’s own concerns, so real affection results and motivates receptiveness to other human individuals *as* fellow subjects of experience. Adorno and Horkheimer also argue that the “internal conflict of drives, in which the agency of conscience is formed, can no longer be worked through,” which is a consequence of “the abolition of the independent economic subject by big industry” (164). In the Freudian sense, the “working through” that usually occurs between the pleasure and reality principles, and requires the agency to act in response to negotiating those principles, is erased with the onset of industrial capitalism, and the transformation of individuals into “objects of trades unions” (164). As I have discussed, human individuals are stripped of subjectivity and agency when they are consumed into capitalism, and since this occurred on a large scale, “[c]onscience is deprived of objects, since individuals’ responsibility for themselves and their dependents is replaced—although still under the old moral title—by their mere performance for the apparatus” (Adorno and Horkheimer 164). Performing as an object of capitalism does not

require taking responsibility for oneself since one's role is entirely determined for her, and so it stands in for the real working through of conscience. Conscience now, in reality, means mechanical performance for industry instead of a sense of moral responsibility to other human beings, but the individuals involved do not realize this transformation themselves. What we gain from looking at this transformation is another aspect of the initial trauma that capitalism exercised, and how the distortion of conscience is yet another condition that ushered in Auschwitz as the greatest catastrophe.

Human individuality is appropriated in every aspect of anti-Semitism. Just as it is difficult to identify a responsible subject for the process of capitalism, it is difficult to do the same for anti-Semitism and Auschwitz. This is not to say that there were not perpetrators, but the complete alienation of human consciousness negates unique, self-reflectively responsible subjects. Adorno and Horkheimer write:

The blindness of anti-Semitism, its lack of intention, lends a degree of truth to the explanation of the movement as a release valve. Rage is vented on those who are both conspicuous and unprotected. And just as, depending on the constellation, the victims are interchangeable: vagrants, Jews, Protestants, Catholics, so each of them can replace the murderer, in the same blind lust for killing, as soon as he feels the power of representing the norm. There is no authentic anti-Semitism, and certainly no born anti-Semite (140).

Just as there is no born capitalist who consciously strives to oppress and objectify human individuals, there are no born anti-Semites. The "victim" itself is an abstract quality that any number of peculiar persons can fill depending on cultural conditions, i.e. those who stand out as deviant at the time become the scapegoat for rage.

Anti-Semitism is one manifestation of a deeper reification of human beings at work. The result is pure action as opposed to thoughtful action, which Adorno and Horkheimer highlight as extremely dangerous: "Whether blindly dealing out blows of

blindly fending them off, persecutors and victims form part of the same calamitous cycle. Anti-Semitic behavior is unleashed in situations in which blinded people, deprived of subjectivity, are let loose as subjects” (140). Individuals perform as if they are subjects, they *act*, but without the self-reflective thought that informs an agential act: the “agency” that they exercise is empty it is mere action. This action is exercised indiscriminately since it lacks reflection, thus human victims become mere numbers, interchangeable and disposable. As Adorno states, “What the sadists in the camps foretold their victims, ‘Tomorrow you’ll be wiggling skyward as smoke from this chimney,’ bespeaks the indifference of each individual life that is the direction of history. Even in his formal freedom, the individual is as fungible and replaceable as he will be under the liquidator’s boots” (*Negative* 362). Human beings as reified, as indifferently interchangeable commodities, become victimized bearers of images that confront one with the utter degradation of human life. To emphasize the indifference that is required, Adorno’s statement could be mistakenly read as though the victims are ghosts, rising skyward *like* smoke rising from a chimney, but the victims in fact *are* the smoke rising from *this* chimney; there is no comparison, no preserving of even the victim’s ghosts, only the literal annihilation of individual human bodies and lives. Primo Levi writes, “The operation was not very painful and lasted no more than a minute, but it was traumatic. Its symbolic meaning was clear to everyone: this is an indelible mark, you will never leave here; this is the mark with which slaves are branded and cattle sent to the slaughter, and that is what you have become” (119). Primo Levi reflects on the moment of receiving a tattooed number, and the traumatic weight that it had. It was the moment at which victims

realized their utter dehumanization, and the fact that this tattoo, and this event, would permanently change their way of life forever.

To reemphasize the utter annihilation of another form of life that I consider characteristic of historical trauma, Adorno writes:

The idea that after this war life will continue ‘normally’ or even that culture might be ‘rebuilt’—as if the rebuilding of culture were not already its negation—is idiotic. Millions of Jews have been murdered, and this is to be seen as an interlude and not the catastrophe itself. What more is this culture waiting for? And even if countless people still have time to wait, is it conceivable that what happened in Europe will have no consequences, that the quantity of victims will not be transformed into a new quality of society at large, barbarism? As long as blow is followed by counter-blow, catastrophe is perpetuated (*Minima* 55).

Portraying the disaster as an interlude, a chaotic interruption to “normal” life after which life will resume “normalcy,” is to claim that history does not actively live in the present, and to relegate Auschwitz exclusively to the “past.” Certain cultural ideologies and pathologies bred this event, and to think that this event spells the culmination *and* end of those cultural conditions is absurd. At the very least, Adorno predicts an afterlife to this event that includes further violence in the form of widespread barbarism. Neither revenge nor mercy are satisfactory responses for Adorno, but worst of all is to attribute logic or meaning to the disaster. This is truly the most destructive, and, as Claude Lanzmann would say, “obscene” project: to operate under the notion that sense, universal truth, understanding can be either applied to or extracted from this event. I disagree with Dori Laub who states, “I think the [psychoanalyst] has the right to sometimes refuse to extend his understanding and his analytic empathy,” (“The Obscenity” 218) in response to the example of Dr. de Groot who refused to analyze Nazis in the war. His statement suggests understanding in the sense of extending oneself, opening oneself to another’s situation, but this is not what Lanzmann means by understanding. Lanzmann means that it is

literally *obscene* or wrong to even believe that understanding in the sense of giving an overarching reason as to why this catastrophe occurred, being concerned with Nazi behavior and what it means, is to do additional injury to the victims. To attribute meaning implies a black and white, a true and false, that is precisely out of place in relation to this disaster that resulted from conventional habituation. Providing meaning is simply to comply with the scientific, mechanistic mentality that facilitated Auschwitz. Auschwitz, and the anti-Semitism that was its prehistory, defies any and all attempts at fixing its meaning.

CHAPTER V

TESTIMONY

Given the thorough devaluation of storytelling and human memory, and events of historical trauma, it is difficult to determine how one can genuinely testify to an event, and thus transmit stories that preserve history's presence *in* the present by communicating self-reflective experience, which from what we have discussed, is a capacity that has been widely destroyed. In this section I look at the distortion of memory with respect to reconstructing events via the courtroom as an example,³² then look at the problem of truth in memory, and finally consider Primo Levi's account of testimony.

First, I will consider the problem of testimony or witnessing as subject to infinite variations in thought, language, and behavior, and why as a witness one is compelled to provide an absolute truth when this is not a possible task to fulfill. The desire for order, which I maintain is common to human beings in general, affects the way in which human beings attempt to tell a story from memory. Spinoza writes, "[M]en prefer order to confusion, as if order were anything in nature more than a relation to our imagination" (E IAppx.). Often truth *is* sacrificed for the sake of transmissibility, in a different way than Benjamin's concern for the transmissibility of experience that he fleshes out in *Illuminations*, and forsaking truth for transmissibility has both generative and destructive results. What I mean is that at times transmissibility, the human capacity for communicating experiences in a Benjaminian sense, trumps truth in terms of necessity.

³² Lyotard has done significant work on this topic, but it is outside the bounds of this particular thesis.

However, at other times what results from an insistence on transmissibility is a coercion and manipulation of memory, potentially creating what we might call a “false memory.”³³ The quote that introduced this thesis showed Primo Levi calling human memory a “fallacious instrument” (23), however, it is not that memory as an apparatus is fallible, but rather the judgment stemming from imagination, from a combination of external and internal affection that facilitates one’s belief that they are willfully calling upon an image of something actually existing that is in error. For example, in the courtroom there is often an insistence on and a pressure to reconstruct the past tidily, even if the “memory” to do so is lacking. Primo Levi provides another aspect of this scenario: “Judges know this [“that memories are not carved in stone”] very well: almost never do two eyewitnesses of the same event describe it in the same way and with the same words, even if the event is recent and if neither of them has a personal interest in distorting it” (23). While I agree with Primo Levi that the courtroom is a place where the players expect contrasting memories in testimony, I believe that there is nevertheless an insistence on perfect memory or the inappropriate compulsion to produce truth despite this awareness. In the legal process there is no room for “holes” in memory. A witness’s lack of consistency in testifying can lead to her discredit, and being attacked by the prosecutor. But on the side of the defense, these memory gaps are sometimes encouraged and solidified. With respect to this problem Primo Levi writes:

An extreme case of the distortion of memory of a committed guilty act is found in its suppression. Here, too, the borderline between good and bad faith can be vague; behind the ‘I don’t know’ and ‘I don’t remember’ that one hears in the courtrooms there is sometimes the precise intent to lie, but at other times it is a fossilized lie, rigidified in a formula. The rememberer has decided not to

³³ I do not speak here of a fiction one tells oneself for the sake of self-preservation, but rather the manipulation of one’s memory by an external source.

remember and has succeeded: by dint of denying its existence, he has expelled the harmful memory as one expels an excretion or a parasite. Lawyers for the defense know very well that the memory gap, or the putative truth, which they suggest to their clients, tends to become forgetfulness and the actual truth (30).

Primo Levi's observation in addition to my own shows that the manipulation of memory occurs on both sides of testimony—both from the direction of the prosecutor and the direction of the defender—but in different ways and with different pressures. Levi describes a situation in which what one is said to remember is coerced into including or excluding certain things, and then internalizing or genuinely believing that those coercions are natural or essential to one's memory. If these suggestions and gaps in memory become internalized to a sufficient degree, the witness will not just accept them, but argue for them to competing parties. Reception transforms into a perverse or deformed advocacy. So we see the witness or testifier situated between two opposing forces, but both concerned with constructing a neatened, digestible story: on one side the manipulation of what is and is not "remembered" for the sake of winning a case, and on the other side the insistence on reconstructing a consistent story from memory regardless of the witness's self-convinced inability to do so.

The question I would like to ask in light of these considerations is why is it that such emphasis, sometimes to a harmful degree, is placed on one's ability to literally *re-*member perfectly in the sense of creating a cohesive story, not necessarily preserving the truth specific to one's experience, while simultaneously there is a persistent fear of memory loss in the sense of not being able to reconstruct events as they were and are in reality? Added to this problem is the fact that, for Freud, memory, particularly with respect to affecting human behavior and habituation, is, at least in part, situated in the unconscious. Truth is a problematic term to use with respect to human memory, and thus

our urge to “represent” truth in our accounts from memory is pregnant with tension. It is problematic precisely because human beings as embodied have embodied experiences of events that affect them in a peculiar way that is not identical to any other human being. Furthermore, given that I am arguing for Spinoza’s account of memory as bound to the imagination, the imagination via memory presents images of experiences to the mind according to the peculiarity of one’s affection, even though it seems to be representing reality. There are clearly facts in the world to which all human beings agree, viz. mathematics, but on the most basic level the peculiarity of one’s experience of an event coupled with the imagination’s presentation of it, seems to slip away from any notion of truth we could conceive. Since I maintain that memory is subject to manipulation and distortion, I feel that I must uphold some kind of “truth” since most would say that an undistorted memory is a true memory, but I believe that what we call a “true” memory is simply the remembering as consistent with one’s peculiar embodied experience—untainted by an external source or authority. I think that we attribute truth to remembering precisely because it is so difficult to give an account of an event as one initially experienced it without changing some aspects, or being influenced by outside information.³⁴ We desire so strongly to preserve events just as they occurred *in reality* that we believe that we do, given the way in which the imagination functions, but really all that we can offer is our peculiar, embodied account, which we pass on by means of the memory’s images. Eliciting Benjamin is helpful in the midst of this tension, Benjamin states, “Experience indeed is a matter of tradition, in collective existence as well as private life. It is less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a

³⁴ Let alone in the case of individual trauma, which forecloses any giving an account of the event.

convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data” (157).

Memory is a fluid and dynamic apparatus that, via imagination, presents and associates images of “data” accumulated or remnants of experience to consciousness. Tradition, the historical experience of one’s body, and the way in which one is habituated to associate certain images is intertwined with the process of remembering. Benjamin also stresses that there is a difference between information as one kind of communication, and storytelling as another: “It is not the object of the story to convey a happening *per se*, which is the purpose of information; rather, it embeds it in the life of the storyteller in order to pass it on as experience to those listening. It thus bears the marks of the storyteller much as the earthen vessel bears the marks of the potter’s hand” (159).

Concerning Auschwitz, there are certain concrete things from the camps that we can observe: the remaining structures and crematoria, the uniforms of prisoners, shoes, hair, logs of names with corresponding numbers, and the corresponding tattoos of those numbers still on victims’ arms today. This is information, and although it serves to assure the occurrence of the disaster, that is the end of its significance. Individuals perversely squabble over the exact number of victims who died in the camps, completely oblivious to the human *persons* who died. This activity simply reiterates the barbarism of dehumanizing victims by transforming them into numbers. The pressure placed on survivors to describe, to give information about their experience in Auschwitz strips them from the account that they give. As Benjamin states Proust’s *memoire volontaire*, memory that the intellect attempts to actively prompt, gives information “about the past [that] retains no trace of it” (158). Recalling information has nothing to do with one’s experience of those details, and thus the historical element is lost. The *memoire*

involuntaire is the source of remembrance of experience. Proust, as Benjamin describes, gives the example of tasting a madeleine cookie and feeling “transported[...]back to the past” to Combray, which he had struggled to attentively remember before (158). As Spinoza would say, if one is affected by two things at the same time, being affected by one will entail the idea of the other. The past exists actively in the present, but individuals are often unable to recognize it when they constantly approach history seeking information. Benjamin writes, “To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it [as it actually existed]. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (255). The “danger” of which he speaks is “that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes,” (255) a mode of discursive control and oppression by those in authority, the “victors.” The threat of one’s memories being re-appropriated and re-habituated in a way that erases her peculiar experience arouses those peculiar memories, and motivates one to attempt to preserve her historical existence by passing on those memories.

I believe that the incessant pressure to reproduce history according to a standard of “truth” stems from the same cultural evolution that I have discussed throughout the latter part of this thesis. The scientific rationality that came with the Enlightenment has been habituated so thoroughly into Western culture that everything is viewed as a matter of truth, when many things are simply not subject to truth. Alienated consciousness allows human individuals to both judge memory *per se* as “fallible,” and simultaneously demand that witnesses reproduce the “truth” of past events. What we hear from childhood

is “tell the truth,” and we are habituated to attribute to accounts of experience truth and falsity, which presents an obstacle to transmissibility in the Benjaminian sense.³⁵

Excursus—

One could argue that by insisting on the dynamic nature of memory I am committing a kind of essentialism, and constraining memory, and history for that matter to a certain framework of fluidity. However, in order to uphold a genuinely dialectical approach, to attempt to overturn existing doxa, it is helpful to consider Marcuse’s argument that dialectic not only takes up “a critique of conformistic logic, which denies the reality of contradictions,” but it also takes up “a critique of the given state of affairs on its own grounds,” and concerns itself with the fact that technological civilization affirms “the dynamic character of the *status quo*” (445, my emphasis). The sense of reality about which Marcuse worries is that which “seems promising and productive enough to repel or absorb all alternatives” (445). The point at which dialectics can critique this sense of reality is precisely that it makes room for each unique change and dynamic, thus relegating any and all contradiction to “the same framework of life: streamlining rather than abolishing the domination of man, both by man and by the products of his labor” (Marcuse 445). Therefore the fluidity of which this thesis speaks with regard to memory, the individual/society relation, and history indicates that history as dynamic is not capable of being categorized into a temporally linear progression of

³⁵ The demand for truth from the outset of recollecting an experience is incongruous with telling a story that involves peculiar affections, emotions, and desires, which make individual human testimonies or stories unique, and therefore is a hindrance to storytelling.

“changes.” Rather, memory and history alike are situated in material objective conditions external to the human body that impart peculiarity to any event or memory trace.

Therefore, even when this thesis discusses human memory as an apparatus, in the background is always the fact that objective material conditions and other human beings affect the human individual, and thus memory’s fluidity is always already in relation to material conditions and other human beings.

Benjamin makes manifest the dialectical project of the historian who emphasizes “the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one,” as opposed to “establishing a causal connection between various moments in history” (*Illuminations* 263). This historian begins to think dialectically because she does not view history as a neatly sequenced string of events that can be causally rationalized and justified. She rather works on history by recognizing history as a “constellation” of events that connects the present with any number of past events, not just those most immediately prior to the present. Benjamin writes, “Thinking involves not only the flow of thoughts, but their arrest as well. Where thinking suddenly stops in a configuration pregnant with tensions, it gives that configuration a shock, by which it crystallizes into a monad. A historical materialist approaches a historical subject only where he encounters it as a monad” (*Illuminations* 262-263). The task of the dialectician is to practice an active thinking that turns upon the tidy flow of thought, thought that has solidified into a totality, frozen due to an impasse, and generates questions on behalf of those tensions. Marcuse presents a similar idea to Benjamin’s concept of history being a constellation of events: “Dialectical thought invalidates the a priori opposition of value and fact by understanding all facts as stages of a single process—a process in which subject and object are so joined that truth

can be determined only within the subject-object totality. All facts embody the knower as well as the doer; they continuously translate the past into the present” (445). The past exists fully in the present since to reflect on the past is to incorporate oneself as reflecting as well as the “doer” of the past event. Marcuse’s argument mirrors the relationship between human individual and society. Facts in thought involve both knowledge and action, and necessarily do not just involve an object but also the subject, and in the same way neither society nor nature are objects “out there,” the human individual is not a “dominion within a dominion” as Spinoza states. Nature, society, and human individual are all part of the same structure, constantly affecting and producing each other, all part of “a single process” (Marcuse 445).

Primo Levi represents the most thoughtful and careful examination of testimony and memory, while providing some of his own testimony in *The Drowned and the Saved*. What makes his account so compelling is that he invites one to be critical of survivors’ testimonies. Levi writes, “It is natural and obvious that the most substantial material for the reconstruction of truth about the camps is the memories of the survivors,” but “they should also be read with a critical eye” since “the prisoner felt overwhelmed by a massive edifice of violence and menace but could not form for himself a representation of it because his eyes were fixed to the ground by every single minute’s needs” (16, 17). The most basic needs of self-preservation must be met before any kind of reflection on one’s experience is possible, and since the prisoners were not only trying to preserve

themselves, but there was an active force against their doing so, it was nearly impossible to gain any kind of “overall vision” (17) of their situation. Not every individual suffered trauma in the lagers, and from those survivors we have the most testimonies, but as Levi says the majority of the prisoners were not privileged as he was, and these prisoners were either killed “or their capacity for observation was paralyzed by suffering and incomprehension,” (17) i.e. trauma. Levi means privileged in the sense of intellectually sensitive to the political implications of the camps. He writes:

[T]he privileged par excellence, that is, those who acquired privilege for themselves by becoming subservient to camp authority, did not bear witness at all, for obvious reasons, or left incomplete or distorted or totally false testimony. Therefore the best historians of the Lagers emerged from among the very few who had the ability and luck to attain a privileged observatory without bowing to compromises, and the skill to tell what they saw, suffered, and did with the humility of a good chronicler, that is, taking into account the complexity of the Lager phenomenon and the variety of human destinies being played out in it (18).

Levi does not place much weight in the accounts of those who were complicit in the authority of the camps, not of any fault of their own, but because their position imparted the perverse distortion of embodying a role complicit with the Nazis. Thus, Levi recognizes that very few survivors were capable of adequately testifying to the event, but those that could were primarily political prisoners who, despite the conditions in which they found themselves, could “interpret the events they saw” (18). A combination of this intellectual background and objective conditions that facilitated their ability to resist compromising themselves to the authority is what for Levi makes the best testimony we can hope for in light of this disaster.

Others “still agree to testify,” but most, Levi maintains, “[H]ave ever more blurred and stylized memories, often, unbeknownst to them, influenced by information gained from later readings or the stories of others. In some cases, naturally, the lack of

memory is simulated, but the many years that have gone by make it credible” (19). As has been discussed, individuals can incorporate bits of information from external sources into their own memory without even realizing it, which I maintain is even more likely in the case of survivors who reach out to fill the memory that they do not possess of their own experience. Levi emphasizes that even though there are “mechanisms” that we ascribe to “memory loss” or the falsification of memory in certain instances such as “traumas, not only cerebral ones; interference from other ‘competitive memories; abnormal conditions of consciousness; repressions; blockages,” even “under normal conditions a slow degradation is at work, an obfuscation of outlines, a so to speak physiological oblivion, which few memories resist” (23-24). As the temporal space between oneself in the present and a past event grows, the memory of that event undoubtedly becomes less defined. Levi states that of course practice, reflecting on a memory, can help preserve it, but this too is a suspect act. He writes, “[A] memory evoked too often, and expressed in the form of a story, tends to become fixed in a stereotype, in a form tested by experience, crystallized, perfected, adorned, installing itself in the place of the raw memory and growing at its expense” (24). Just as Freud claims that consciousness arises in the place of a memory trace, a neatened story that one tells consciously can stand in the place of a “raw,” distorted, seemingly incomplete memory. This story as a fiction one tells oneself serves as a mode of self-preservation for the victim, a protection against the immediate pain of the “real” memory.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This thesis has taken up several different but interrelated projects in the hope of showing vicissitudes, to use Freud's term, or various destinies of human memory. Spinoza and Freud as meticulous theorists of the mental apparatus, were the appropriate figures to shape my further discussions of memory given that they uphold human experience as necessarily embodied. By looking at both individual and historical trauma, I hoped to reveal the limits of trauma, by which I mean elucidating the way in which individual trauma and historical trauma indicate different results, but have crucial overlapping characteristics. Finally, considering testimony allowed me to show how memory is a complicated yet essential apparatus for telling one's own stories, as well as for participating in and questioning cultural narratives.

The imagination, and its crucial relation to memory, is the center about which all of these pieces move, and through my analysis I have shown that although we have a tendency to err in our judgment of the imagination's and thus memory's capacities to represent reality, the imagination and memory are the apparatuses that set our peculiar embodied experiences apart from each other as unique human persons. We are the product of our individual histories, and this is something to be cherished, and shared with other human beings. Thus I argue that the only potential we have for countering the alienating effect of industrial life, and the distorted narratives that have unfortunately become so habituated, is, as all of the figures I have included would agree, to look at

individual and cultural memory with a critical eye. Doing so affects one with the sense of the threat of one's individual experience being erased, and motivates one to perpetuate her own, embodied experience. Not that this is an easy task, since the generations existing today have been inundated with technology that erases human bodies, but this precisely reflects our need to preserve dialectical thinking. We need more subjectivity, as Adorno and Horkheimer maintain, we need to fight the urge to see any human individual as fungible.

If we could put aside the prejudice that storytelling is exclusively for children for just a moment, perhaps we could see the simplicity, necessity, and *real* beauty in a child not asking to hear the truth, but *demanding*, "Tell me a story."