

Making Adorno's Ethics and Politics Explicit

[Review Essay: J.M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xviii + 460 pp.; and Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin (eds.), *Adorno: A Critical Reader* (Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), xi + 442 pp.]

The opening line of J.M. Bernstein's preface to *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* rings true: "Readers of Adorno are inevitably struck by how everything he wrote was infused with a stringent and commanding ethical intensity" (xi). Adorno's lavish invectives chase out the ethical depravity he found hiding in every corner of modern life, and he has thus become a cult figure among the growing demographic of those suffering from a deep dissatisfaction with consumer culture, inching toward complete cynicism, and yet holding dearly to the notion that things should be better. Although disparaged as unreadable by many professional theorists, his esoteric writings often hit home for even newcomers to philosophy because the practical import of his critiques of instrumental rationality becomes obvious when he applies them to our suburbs, shopping malls, and media. Adorno's high-brow venom pools in the soft spots of contemporary life, and we can all follow his arguments far enough to notice an uncomfortable resemblance between the style of thinking governing mass culture and that which ran the death camps of Nazi Europe. The "culture industry"—the term Adorno and Max Horkheimer used to describe the nexus of media, advertisement, and instrumental rationality—has become exponentially more powerful in the information age, and Adorno's seemingly prophetic works have been the subject of renewed interest. Indeed, something like an "Adorno industry" appears to have arisen. This essay reviews two recent contributions to this trend.

Adorno scholarship has been hobbled by his refusal to discuss ethical theory explicitly. Although in his view everything was wrong, Adorno left no idea of what would be right. Adorno described the horrors of modernity with convincing flare, but he never let on just what would make such horrors less horrible. His ethical principles remained opaque, and this caused many readers to incorrectly read his work as nihilistic or

anti-Enlightenment. For critical theorists following Adorno's critique of culture but still hoping to advance causes of social justice, this left a hole in the foundations of emancipatory projects. As the post-Marxian New Left sought ethical bedrock, those with Kantian sensibilities followed Habermas's discourse ethics. Some looked to deconstruction for an alternative, and Simon Critchley's *The Ethics of Deconstruction*¹ performed an influential bait and switch, swapping Derrida's formal "other" for Emmanuel Levinas's phenomenology of the "Other" as a human face and site of infinite responsibility. Deconstruction then seemed to offer ethical guidance, for example, in its apparent advocacy of anti-essentialist identity politics, and it was cited for normative justification in versions of feminism, queer theory, and cultural studies.² Bernstein has been arguing against the solutions offered by both Habermas and proponents of deconstruction, claiming in *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* that Adorno's aesthetic modernism provides the ethical counterpoint to instrumental rationality that deconstruction cannot. In *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*, Bernstein claimed that Adorno, and not Habermas, offers hope for contemporary ethical life.³ While Bernstein established in those works how neither discourse ethics nor deconstruction addressed the primary failure of contemporary life—our inability to think and relate responsibly to concrete particulars—it was not clear that Adorno could offer any substantial alternative. Bernstein wrote *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* to finally make Adorno's normative methods, presuppositions, and commitments explicit.

At 460 pages, Bernstein's book comprises one systematic argument. Bernstein provides signposts and summaries in all the right places, and he reserves non-essential elaboration for his numerous and dense footnotes. This is decidedly not a collection of essays on the theme of Adorno's ethics, nor would it be useful as an introduction to Adorno's work for students unrehearsed in Kant and Hegel.⁴ Bernstein notes that his previous writing on Adorno's ethics "tends to speak only to the converted," and he aims here to escort Adorno's arguments into the center of contemporary analytic debates over normativity (xi). As a result, Robert

¹Simon Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction: Derridas and Levinas* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992).

²The most engaging critical review of these arguments is Nancy Fraser's *Justice Interruptus* (New York: Routledge, 1996), where she persuasively argues that questions of recognition cannot be severed from redistributive concerns.

³See J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992); and *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

⁴For an excellent introduction to Adorno, see Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

Brandom and John McDowell are central figures, and neither Levinas nor Derrida appear at any point. The argument makes great demands of its readers, as it requires us to engage both contemporary analytic and continental philosophy at their most sophisticated. Bernstein thus runs the risk of reaching an unfortunately narrow audience. Considering that Bernstein recently became the Chair of the Department of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research, hopefully we can expect more of this type of rigorous work between the traditions.

Bernstein begins with the familiar Frankfurt School critique of modernity, where modernization causes a conflation of scientific rationality with reason and which in turn leads to "the bureaucratic rationalization of practical life in the context of indefinite economic (capital) expansion" (3). In particular, Bernstein argues that "the disenchantment of the world" and the subsequent "destruction of aura" has left a gap in contemporary ethical thought. Walter Benjamin's notion of aura is at work here, which Benjamin defines "as the unique phenomenon of distance, however close it may be." "While resting on a summer's noon," Benjamin writes, "to trace a range of mountains on the horizon, or a branch that throws its shadow over the observer, until the moment of the hour becomes part of their appearance—that is what it means to breathe the aura of *those* mountains, *that* branch." Aura is thus "the apprehension of an object in its uniqueness, a uniqueness that is temporally and spatially bound, where the spatio-temporal binding of the apprehension is the condition of preserving its uniqueness."⁵ The notion of aura is best understood in contrast to the practice of abstract classification. As the dominant mode of cognition in modernity, abstract identification specifies an individual thing in the world, picks it out as a member of a group, and places it under a concept. Regardless of whether I understand the thing as an instantiation of a Platonic form or as an example within a scientific class, what matters is that the object is no longer a unique and strange thing but is rather a member of a category that makes sense to me. This process, which Adorno names "identity thinking," causes a belief that concepts fully "capture" the objects to which they refer. When we consistently disregard particularity while reinforcing similarity, we forget the notion of something genuinely concrete, particular, unique, non-fungible, or incommensurable. The material world is made to fit the abstract idea and actual things are seen as nothing more than examples of their concept. Abstract classifications do not, however, inhere in objects but rather are artifacts of intellectual organization. Identity thinking limits our knowledge of objects to the classifications we lay across them and

⁵Walter Benjamin, *One Way Street, and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1985), p. 250 (emphasis added).

therefore elides a thing's specificity, singularity, physicality, and historical, cultural, physical, emotional, and temporal context. I forget that my classification is merely a construct of convenience. Because identity thinking pretends that concepts exhaust their objects, the thing's particularity will remain overlooked and in reason's blind spot. When Adorno claims that the "splinter in your eye is the best magnifying glass," the splinter marks precisely this blindness to particularity. The notion of aura preserves what Adorno and Bernstein refer to as concrete particularity against identity thinking, which reaches its practical apotheosis in universal commodification. The whole of the world is reduced to money under universal commodification, and our most distinguished judges, for example, argue for the open sale of children in order to combat the demand for healthy white babies and unabashedly conceptualize "thousands of children in foster care" as "an unsold inventory in a warehouse."⁶ Under this view of the world the idea that things have auratic individuality—meaning because of their very particularity—is written off as moralistic naïveté. Just as everything has an adequate concept, everything has a price.

For Bernstein, the disenchantment of the world strips "persons and things of their auratic particularity and thereby transforms questions of value into *reflective* ones concerning the status and character of rules (reasons) for action" (72). Following Dieter Henrich, Bernstein argues that by making ethics a discipline of abstract rule-following, Kant sapped it of motivational power. He explains: "by wanting to radically detach validity from interest, in order to ensure the former's necessity, [Kant] has, despite himself, constituted the moral law as an object of theoretical and not practical insight" (147). Kant requires ethical actors to be disinterested because by bracketing inclinations we rise above our fickle and relative desires and can recognize the universal truth transcending our contexts. Once free from our interests we will discover our duties, and a good will enables us to honor these duties even when they conflict with our inclinations. Actual people, places, and things become irrelevant distractions from ethical deliberation. When we help a stranger, tell the truth, or honor one's dignity, for Kant we do not do so because of the living and breathing people before us but rather out of responsibility to the moral law. When I visit a friend in the hospital, for example, for the deontologist I must be guided by a commitment to honor the moral law rather than by the actuality of my friend and her suffering. I go to the hospital *because of* the moral law rather than *because of* my friend's suf-

⁶Elisabeth M. Landes and Richard A. Posner, "The Economics of the Baby Market," *Journal of Legal Studies* 7 (1978): 323-48, p. 344. Here Landes and Judge Posner also refer to the excess supply of minority and impaired babies as a "glut."

fering. Kant thus drains ethics of the blood and passions of life and replaces them with cold universal norms. Ethics becomes unmoving because in seeking to render ethical deliberation truly autonomous, Kant makes "insight into the validity of the moral law the source or occasion of interest without really being able to make intelligible why interest should track insight" (147). Theoretical and practical reason divorce, and we lose interest in doing what we find rationally acceptable. "By cutting insight off from reason," Bernstein explains, "Kant unsurprisingly has no way of stitching them back together" (*ibid.*).

Bernstein reads Adorno's negative dialectics as an attempt to mend this fracture between reason and objects by recognizing "the normative authority of the factual" (316). To Adorno, dialectic means "no more to begin with than that objects do not go into concepts without leaving a remainder, that objects turn out to contradict the traditional norm of adequation."⁷ Unlike identity thinking, dialectics recognize the ultimate inadequacy of the concept to contain the object. Dialectics alert us to the fact that the thing is not merely the sum of its classifications, and by flagging the failure of classifications to recognize particularity, dialectics enlighten Enlightenment about itself. What most interests Bernstein about this process is the power of objects themselves. While rationalization is typically construed as the process of weaning thinking from the oddities of the world in order to make thought truly autonomous, Adorno teaches that concepts depend on objects. As Bernstein phrases it, Adorno realizes that "identity depends on non-identity, that identity thinking 'lives off' the non-identical" (274). The entirety of Adorno's philosophy can thus be read as the attempt to "concede the object's dialectical primacy" by demonstrating how concepts rely on and fail to accommodate their objects.⁸ Bernstein frames this problem in terms of predicative and non-predicative identification. He defines non-predicative identification "as that portion of the concept that ties predicative identification to experience," and he argues that "all (empirical) predicative identification incorporates (presupposes) a moment of non-predicative identification" (299). He provides the following slogan to declare his position: "No predicative identification without non-predicative identification" (274). In his exchange with Brandom's account of material inference and McDowell's theory of perceptual experience, Bernstein argues that the Kantian tradition "dissolves material inferential relations amongst concepts into formally logical relations," and he understands Adorno to be "reactivating relations of material inference" (36).

⁷Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1990), p. 5.

⁸Theodor Adorno, "Subject and Object," in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds.), *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: Continuum, 1982), p. 505.

All of this, Bernstein claims, can solve the motivational deficiency troubling Kantian ethics. "Enlightenment," Bernstein writes, "destroys not just a range of beliefs but a certain previous ethical form of relating to objects: knowing them" (110). In order to "sustain the intuitions of ordinary moral consciousness against the trespass of moral reason," the object itself "must be the ground of moral action ..." (186). Ethical concerns are themselves concrete in that they do not confront abstract laws of reason but rather objects in temporal and historical contexts—a friend in need, a squirming creature, or an otherwise vulnerable thing. These objects make claims on us, and Bernstein believes that in order "to hear or perceive this claim requires us to experience the object" in Adorno's full cognitive sense. Thus Bernstein claims that we must undergo an "axial turn" in moral consciousness, and make objects, rather than formal laws or reason, the very material of ethical life (186). Once objects themselves guide ethical claims, we will find their "normative authority" in the material inferences from the state of affairs to what should be done (361). Thus we see someone bleeding badly, understand this situation, and know to apply a tourniquet. A badly bleeding person—what Bernstein considers a state of affairs—makes an "intrinsically motivating" claim upon us (263). Understood in this way, the problem of motivation disappears because "being moved to help another in distress is no more mysterious than being moved to avoid stepping in poison ivy whilst wearing only shorts: one perceives and acts accordingly" (325). Rationalist ethics has, in its attempt to become autonomous, lost this sense of the "aboutness" of ethical life.

Bernstein explains why this formalization of ethics is counter-intuitive. "[E]veryday acts of judgment are object-involving in a manner that explanatory activity is not," and examples abound to support this claim. We do not, for example, rescue a dog because dog-rescuing is good but because we are moved to save *that particular dog*. As Bernstein explains, "[i]f the authority of norms is situational, then the ground for my action had better be, for example, the awfulness of this situation—and not the belief that cruelty is wrong" (369-70). When I witness a person suffering gravely, I am moved to help her because of the actuality of her suffering rather than by a formal belief that people should help each other in similar situations. From this, Bernstein makes an argument that we should consider "is living" as a "material a priori predicate" (301). "What makes the predicate a priori is its controlling 'all' our reactions," he explains, and what "makes it material is that its a priori power is not detachable from the exemplary instances through which it is experientially announced" (303). He applies this all the way down to a fly: "It is not because I take up an attitude or stance that the fly is living, but because it is living it solicits a normatively structured response, whether respectful or transgressive (sadistic)" (305). Bernstein thus

respectful or transgressive (sadistic)" (305). Bernstein thus understands the Nazi genocide as a distinctive type of atrocity. The purpose of fully administered death "was to make its victims meaningless organisms, walking bits of flesh and bone with a number attached, to which the forms of predication proper to the human were no longer applicable." Rather than suffering simple moral disregard, the victims were disenchanting in the same manner as nature: "The mechanisms of the final solution perfectly supervene on the remnants of the structures of material inference that still bound Germans and Jews; hence, not the acting against moral norms, but acting to remove the conditions through which moral predicates apply distinguishes the Nazi genocide" (382). Himmler's speeches directing the SS to cultivate the "coldness" required to overcome the compassion that might be stirred by "the piles of bodies which mass extermination requires" chillingly punctuate Bernstein's claim (409). Some might accuse Bernstein and Adorno of placing too much of the blame for the "coldness" of our culture on the structures of modernity, for surely "warmth" is not the natural state of man. Pre-modern history and the few cultures remaining isolated from industrialization seem more brutal than our rights-laden democratic culture, but the point here is not to return to an idealized past but rather to address the separation of reason and motivation that has been an unintended consequence of Enlightenment.

Numerous questions can be asked of Bernstein's immense and remarkable project. Although both are untroubled by it, ethical relativism continues to be a problem for Bernstein just as it is for Adorno, despite the fact that both ultimately advocate and hope for enlightenment. For both, relativism is a purely theoretical problem because it dissolves in the face of objects and decisions. In other words, for Bernstein relativism only seems like a problem from outside of an ethical context—a place where an ethical actor cannot be. According to Bernstein, all ethical actors are "situated" and thus need only to "perceive and act accordingly." But this response remains unsatisfying for a number of reasons. First, worries over relativism allowing "haphazard," culturally anomalous, individual behavior are of secondary concern compared to collective, fundamental, and competing differences in perspective (453). Individual deviance can indeed be read as a failure to understand an object within a particular context, but cultural relativism seems fully compatible with the normative social conditioning that causes us to perceive objects as having a range of moral worth. We need only consider the disparate status of cows in various cultures. The usual worries about relativism are thus reproduced in Bernstein's object-oriented ethics. Further, even if we agree with Bernstein's claim that concrete particulars possess inherent normative force, he seems to underestimate how easily that draw can be re-

sisted. While he believes that a perception of “bleeding badly” will produce the material inference to “apply a tourniquet,” in many parts of the world today “bleeding badly” would be followed by “finish her off.” The smell of blood may always be a call for help, but those answering may be responding to less benevolent, but nonetheless object-oriented, motivations. Perhaps the deeper problem lies in the fact that so much of the world already lives with a view of others that Bernstein describes as peculiar to the concentration camps. Faces appear in contexts of competition and struggle, and we are all trained in the coldness that abstracts life. Even the doctor no longer first thinks to stop bleeding, but rather surveys the injury within the objectives of managed care. Whether on the trading floor or in the battlefield, the world trains us to look past life in order to meet other aims, and we may lack the ability or occasion to genuflect upon the source of ethical knowledge. For Bernstein, substantive universality will become available only upon the arrival of genuine enlightenment, but we are left wondering how to respond to its challenge until then.

Similarly, Bernstein does not explain what would constitute a genuine ethical encounter—one that would necessarily produce the appropriate material inference. Auschwitz serves as Bernstein’s primary example for the claim that situational truths can have ethical force, but a more robust account of the constitutive components of such an experience would be helpful. How close must I get, so to speak, before I feel the pull of the object’s ethical gravity? If objects provide “situational truths,” what counts as a situation? Must we come face to face with the object? Surely immediate encounters with suffering things solve the motivational deficit in Kantian ethics, but several issues arise. Adorno himself had little confidence that we could actually experience things in any meaningful, non-instrumental sense in an age of scientific rationality, and this led him to consider avant-garde works of art the last place to find anything like an experience of an object. Bernstein does explain that “once we understand what features of modernist works of art make them ideal candidates for objects of [non-instrumental] experience, then it is possible to see that ordinary, intramundane objects can also possess these features,” but this appears to be the point at which Bernstein is furthest from Adorno (38). The departure is welcome, but not entirely convincing.

Further, Bernstein refers to the normative power of seeing a hungry child in the street (393). The experience consists of recognizing face to face that this person is starving and then drawing the material inference to offer help to this particular person. But would the experience have the same effect if I saw the same child in a photograph? Or a group of children on television? If not, precisely what does the mediated experience lack? If so, is the image different from a newspaper article about a

starving child or even an unnamed mass of starving children around the world? Can the normative power of an object be distributed to other objects sharing relevant characteristics? If such ethical claims can be generalized, might they give rise to something akin to the types of abstract formal laws that this "axial turn" in ethics is supposed to solve? Similarly, which experiences of animals will orient our ethical responses to them? For most of us who do not live on farms, those middle-sized non-human animals that Bernstein worries about usually come before us in shrink-wrap. While a cow in the field may make an ethical claim on me, the piece of meat between a bun apparently does not. If modern life provides a steady diet of dead things, then Bernstein's argument for "is living" as the "material a priori predicate" may depend on a set of experiences that are largely unavailable to us. The answer to each of these concerns requires Bernstein to explain what would count as a "situation" that would give rise to the "situational truths" he refers to. If he can successfully explain how ordinary objects hold ethical force and what constitutes an experience of such an object, Bernstein's ethical theory may offer untapped political insights.

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Adorno: A Critical Reader, edited by Nigel Gibson and Andrew Rubin, picks up the theme of Adorno's politics in the majority of its essays. The composition of the collection demonstrates how Adorno scholarship has migrated into diverse theoretical fields, as only three of the sixteen contributors hold positions in philosophy departments. Arranged under the themes "Politics and Culture," "Aesthetics," and "Critical Theory and After," the editors claim that "[a]ll of the essays in this volume examine Adorno's writing against the dominant and traditional readings of Adorno" (16). The prevailing view of Adorno referred to casts him as a "mandarin aesthete," and without exception the authors either reiterate or defend Adorno against this charge.

Several essays attempt to mine political praxis from Adorno by explicating his biography. Russell Berman finds the image of Adorno as "unpolitical aesthete" to be "little more than a phantom that haunts the left that cultivates its own self-deceptions about an immediacy of political practice." "Because [the left] is convinced that progressive politics must be easy," Berman claims, "it demonizes Adorno for pointing out the difficulties" (45). Beginning with Adorno's plea to Horkheimer to stay in Germany and confront the Nazis ("No Max, we have to stay here. We have to fight."), Berman documents Adorno's political activism and personal involvement in post-war politics. Henry Pickford also challenges the caricature of Adorno as an ivory-tower academic, drawing attention

to Adorno's consistent presence in the public sphere through his 180 radio addresses, numerous television broadcasts, and surprisingly practical suggestions for reforming public education. Thanks to the Freedom of Information Act, in "The Adorno Files" Andrew Rubin reports on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's surveillance of Adorno while he was in exile in the United States. Rubin's findings are often amusing, as he notes that "the FBI had enormous difficulty in grasping exactly what kind of intellectual labor it was examining." Hoover apparently could not crack Adorno and Horkheimer's secret code and unlock the meaning of terms like "Nietzsche" and "German Expressionism" (174). Like Ber- man, Pickford, and the editors in their introduction to the volume, Rubin devotes most of his essay to the details of Adorno's life. While it is somewhat interesting to learn that Adorno drove a 1936 green Plymouth and refreshing to read his idea of watching Hollywood's most mendacious films with young students in order to teach "what a swindle" they are, several of these essays recount redundant biographical facts in order to argue that Adorno was indeed politically engaged. These details have a tenuous relationship to Adorno's latent political philosophy and one cannot help but read them as the counterpoint to discussions of Heidegger's political affiliation.

Douglas Kellner updates claims he originally made in his *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity*, refusing to accept Adorno's account of totally administered culture.⁹ When "such nightmare thoughts dissolve," Kellner argues, "one sees a society in conflict with competing groups struggling to control the direction of society, with progressive and regressive forces in contention, and with a variety of cultural artifacts offering diverse pleasure and oppositional form and content" (106). Kellner offers a rosy picture of contemporary culture and its emerging forms of mass media, such as the Internet, that provide tools for resisting global capitalism, but his optimism should be tempered. Kellner cites Adorno's complaint that films "are so designed that quickness, powers of observation, and experience are undeniably needed to apprehend them at all; yet sustained thought is out of the question if the spectator is not to miss the relentless rush of fact."¹⁰ Here Adorno is at his most prophetic, anticipating our culture that exposes us to 3000 advertisements per day, breeds short attention spans, and trades collective agency for individual desire satisfaction. Kellner, however, offers little evidence to counter these trends except to claim that some popular music can "help to cultivate oppositional subcultures" (102). Considering the commercialization of

⁹Douglas Kellner, *Critical Theory, Marxism, and Modernity* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989).

¹⁰Ibid., p. 91, citing Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), pp. 126-27.

even the most apparently alternative forms of music such as Japanese noise, Kellner's claim requires further explanation of precisely what the cultural pockets he describes actually resist. Surely they do not seriously challenge consumer culture or identitarian thinking.¹¹ Nigel Gibson shares Kellner's concern that "Adorno's negative dialectic is a flattening, all-consuming one that allows no place for an alternative to emerge," but he also fails to provide any convincing evidence of cultural depth (282).

Two essays criticize Adorno for disenfranchising political actors by stripping them of agency. In "Queerly Amiss: Sexuality and the Logic of Adorno's Dialectics," Jennifer Rycenga characterizes Adorno as "glaringly essentialist and embarrassingly heteronormative" (361-62). Rycenga takes Adorno's sociological descriptions of the culturally induced "neuroses" suffered by homosexuals in a time of moral opprobrium for psychological reductionism, and she claims that this results in a "crushing determinism" that disables queer liberation movements (370). Further, Rycenga claims that Adorno "abandons the transformation of reality because, quite literally, there is no one left to carry out such a project in the absence of the subject" (363). But for Adorno the subject, while itself a product of the culture industry, is the vehicle of cognition and therefore still remains operative in his theory. Indeed, the very viability of Adorno's project, as outlined in the preface to *Negative Dialectics*, depends on the possibility that he might "use the strength of the subject to break out of the delusion of constitutive subjectivity."¹² Susan Buck-Morss makes sense of the subject-object dialectic in Adorno by describing the poles "as necessary co-determinates; neither mind nor matter could dominate each other as a philosophical first principle." She continues: "Truth resided in the object, but it did not lie ready at hand; the material object needed a rational subject in order to release the truth which it contained."¹³ It therefore seems unfair to associate Adorno with the postmodern claim of the death of the subject. This problem also arises in Lou Turner's argument that the psychological critique Adorno provides in *The Authoritarian Personality* denies Jewish historical agency. Anson Rabinbach also writes on the status of Jewish identity in Adorno's work, reconstructing *Dialectic of Enlightenment* around the problem of anti-Semitism.

The reader contains other noteworthy essays on Adorno's aesthetic theory, including Edward Said's "Adorno as Lateness Itself," Krzysztof

¹¹See my "Why Hardcore Goes Soft: Adorno, Japanese Noise, and the Extirpation of Dissonance," in *Cultural Logic* 4 (2001), also available at: <http://eserver.org/clogic/4-2/smith.html>.

¹²Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. xx.

¹³Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press, 1977), p. 81.

Ziarek's paper on Adorno and Heidegger's radical conceptions of art, and two selections on musical theory and analysis by Max Paddison and Rose Rosengard Subotnik. Mauro Bozzetti's "Hegel on Trial: Adorno's Critique of Philosophical Systems" and Samuel Weber's re-reading of Adorno on Kierkegaard's theory of repetition demonstrate the importance of nineteenth-century figures other than Marx to Adorno's work. The collection also includes an essay by Andreas Huyssen on Adorno's early writing on Wagner, and a stimulating piece by Miriam Hansen in which she unpacks Adorno's theory of film and his worry that we will be duped by the medium even when we are active spectators.

One comes to realize that each of these essays is preoccupied with the ethical and political commitments beneath the surface of Adorno's work. All of these contributors, and perhaps all Adorno scholars, thus implicitly rely on what Bernstein attempts to make explicit.¹⁴

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