

Adorno vs. Levinas: Evaluating points of contention*

NICK SMITH

University of New Hampshire, Department of Philosophy (E-mail: nick.smith@unh.edu)

Abstract. Although Adorno and Levinas share many arguments, I attempt to sharpen and evaluate their disagreements. Both held extreme and seemingly opposite views of art, with Adorno arguing that art presents modernity's highest order of truth and Levinas denouncing it as shameful idolatry. Considering this striking difference brings to light fundamental substantive and methodological incompatibilities between them. Levinas' assertion of the transcendence of the face should be understood as the most telling point of departure between his and Adorno's critiques of instrumental reason. I attempt to explain why Levinas believed this move was justifiable and how Adorno would understand Levinas' notion of illeity as a cultural byproduct and a form of dogmatism. Adorno's historical and sociological account of the disenchantment of the world and the destruction of aura within a culture fully administered by scientific rationality and economic reductionism sharply contrasts to Levinas' transcendental phenomenology, and I argue that Adorno's thoroughgoing refusal to constrain dialectical reflection is ultimately more compelling.

1. Introduction

The incontrovertible kinship between Adorno and Levinas has received increasing attention in recent years.¹ This paper briefly considers these points of solidarity, but I am primarily concerned with evaluating Adorno and Levinas' substantial disagreements. Unlike recent commentators who have suggested that Adorno and Levinas are "like right and left hands at the piano"² and that their theories "resemble each other formally, to the point of becoming *almost* interchangeable and collapsing into each other," I claim that their differences present Continental philosophers with fundamental and incompatible choices.³ I hope to sharpen this debate here. While flagging instances where Adorno's version of negative dialectics suffers from weaknesses similar to those I attribute to Levinas' ethical phenomenology, I ultimately offer arguments largely supporting Adorno's positions in these exchanges.

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N. SMITH

I begin with Adorno and Levinas' striking divergence over the status of modern art, an incongruity which is elucidating given their similar accounts of the inner workings of post World War II aesthetics. Both hold extreme views of art, with Adorno arguing that art offers modernity's highest order of truth and Levinas denouncing it as shameful idolatry. Notwithstanding attempts of several Levinasian theorists to redeem art as a site of alterity by cleaving his work in "early" and "later" periods, Levinas consistently found art to be a beguiling shadow when compared with the true transcendence of the face. I understand Levinas' assertion of the transcendence of the face as the most telling point of departure between his and Adorno's critiques of instrumental reason. After attempting to explain why Levinas believed this move was justifiable, I imagine how Adorno would understand Levinas' undialectical notion of illeity as sharing properties with dogmatic practices like the occult. Whereas Levinas charges the face with the power to pierce instrumental rationality, Adorno is much less optimistic about the ability of anything to break through our habits of cognition. Adorno's historical and sociological account of the disenchantment of the world and the destruction of aura within a culture fully administered by scientific rationality and economic reductionism sharply contrasts to Levinas' transcendental phenomenology. Unlike Levinas, Adorno remains mindful of the social forces that elevate the Other to an object of genuflection and condition our interactions with it. Compared with Adorno's description of the dialectical constitution of the non-identical, Levinas' Other seems increasingly suspect as he maintains that only the human face presents us with genuine transcendent otherness. In the end, we have no decisive reason for elevating the non-identity of the human over that of the animal or even the inanimate object. I conclude by recasting these points of contention in terms of Adorno and Levinas' conceptions of the relationship between ethics and cognition. While for Levinas ethics is first philosophy, negative dialectics cannot coronate any form of thought as fundamental. Ethics and cognition must remain dialectical or else ethics itself becomes authoritarian and false. This leads me to find Adorno's thoroughgoing refusal to constrain dialectical reflection upon the limits of cognition ultimately more compelling even in light of its own closely-related difficulties.

I recognize that addressing this range of concerns within a relatively short paper may be imprudent. In order to bring these immensely complex thinkers into a dialogue within this space I must speak in rough-hewn concepts that will miss most of the subtleties that make Adorno and Levinas so evocative. It is my hope, however, that readers will find that the need to frame these questions warrants my simplifications.

2. Points of agreement

Perhaps the most broadly influential confluence of Adorno and Levinas' works is their shared conception of life as entirely instrumentalized. According to what has become a largely uncontested axiom within contemporary Continental philosophy, the instrumental rationality of scientific abstract classification converts all things into tools. Accordingly, we relate to things only to the extent that we put them to use. From this perspective, the notion of something being genuinely concrete, particular, unique, non-fungible, or incommensurable is lost. Abstract classification destroys the auratic individuality of things while conditioning us to understand objects as useful specimens. This egocentric mode of understanding leads us to believe that concepts capture objects, and the world is thus made to fit the abstract idea. Although both distinguish their work from the deontological tradition, the Kantian tenor of this shared aspect of their work resounds as a system of mere means supplants the kingdom of ends.

For both Adorno and Levinas, this is a dangerous mistake. Abstract classifications do not inhere in objects but rather are artifacts of intellectual (and for Adorno economic) organization. Instrumental reason misidentifies all things when reducing their astoundingly complex existences to a generalized concept. Such conceptual shorthand is of course useful considering that it would be terribly inconvenient if we treated every object we encountered as so unique as to be beyond conceptualization. Living with such truth would not be practical, and thus these conceptual mistakes become necessary for life. Yet we forget that this functional necessity concedes to the particularity of objects and we pretend that concepts exhaust what they occlude. Both Adorno and Levinas repeatedly remind us of this error. For Levinas, all attempts to contain the Other within the Same will end with the Other overflowing the same and continually breaching the categories placed over it. For Adorno, the concept's inability to accommodate the non-identical demonstrates this deficiency and 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.⁴ In other words, for both philosophers objects exceed the thoughts directed at them.

The remainder resulting from the inadequacy of identitarian thinking drives both philosophies; Adorno names this excess the non-identical and Levinas refers to it as the Other. Contrary to what both view as the prevailing scientific ideology, Adorno and Levinas claim that whatever lies beyond concepts is neither meaningless nor a permissible margin of error. Instead, the limit of conceptual knowledge marks the source of the Other's ultimate meaning, with Levinas more inclined to describe the Other as overflowing the limit

imposed upon it by the Same and Adorno likely to emphasize that the cognitive recognition of the limit flags a negativity rather than a positivity.⁵ Despite the differences discussed below, Adorno and Levinas agree on several basic properties of this Other: as resistant to all forms of generalization, it is radically particular; as radically particular, it refuses commensuration with other things; as incommensurable and irreducible to quantification, it merits something loosely akin to dignity; and as dignified and inaccessible, it stands in a relationship of distance and – although this will be challenged with respect to Adorno – height from the subject.⁶

With the non-identical characterized in this way, Adorno and Levinas understand the subsumption of the particular to the universal as a form of violence motivated by the desire to master the unknown. This drive reaches its practical apotheosis in Auschwitz, where executioners were trained in the scientific “coldness” required to see their victims as no more than embodiments of their ethnicity. From such a perspective, Adorno writes, “it was no longer an individual that died, but a specimen.”⁷ Both commit to reforming the type of reductive thinking that leads to such horror – a horror both had personally confronted. Although their disagreements regarding the priorities between cognition and ethics will be discussed later, for both thinkers cognition is entwined with suffering. Ethical intensity punctuates every passage in their works, even when the subject matter at hand appears to be normatively neutral. For Levinas, the ethical imperative famously precedes cognition, and for Adorno “the need to lend a voice to suffering is the condition of all truth.”⁸ Because ethics is founded in the relationship between thought and the remainder of the process of thinking, the entire motivational structure for undertaking philosophy shifts. While the interrogation of the nature of that which lies beyond concepts might seem like a philosophical goose chase, for Adorno and Levinas the problems the non-identical poses to philosophy are unlike those arising from square circles because of their inherent relationship to violence.

By their accounts, abandoning the problem of the Other – for instance by deeming it nonsensical and unworthy of serious study – would entail exterminating the Other. Negative dialectics and the deconstructive labor of “unsaying the said” thus work to keep the problem of the Other alive.⁹ Given the nature of difficulties presented by the Other, however, philosophy can only do so much with its classificatory concepts. This leads Adorno and Levinas to understand the primary task of philosophy to be explaining the difficulty regarding the non-violent relationship to the Other. For Levinas, this takes place in the relationship between the saying and said, and for Adorno it occurs within negative dialectics and speculative identification. By articulating the limitations of their own articulacy, both express the impossibility – a metaphysical impossibility for Levinas and a sociological impossibility for

Adorno – of non-instrumental comportment with the Other. While the saying will always become a said and the concept will deny particularity, their efforts to do otherwise provide insight. But such insight comes at a cost. As J.M. Bernstein writes of Adorno’s speculative identification, the practice reaches “the point where redemption and betrayal speak together.”¹⁰ Betrayal haunts both projects, in the betrayal of particularity for its concept in Adorno and in Levinas’ own conception of his work wherein “everything is translated before us, be it at the price of a betrayal.”¹¹ This betrayal always renews responsibility, and neither practice can complete its tasks. Just as negative dialectics can never conclude, for Levinas “there is no end” to the demand that the saying undo the said.¹² Both therefore call for infinite critique as an ethical imperative.

We should understand both projects not only as a response to the violence of abstraction, but also as an attempt to mend the fracture between Enlightenment rationalism and motivation for ethical action. Within the Kantian tradition, ethical actors must strip themselves of all inclinations in order to see through their self-interest and into the order of universal laws. Our relationships to actual people, places, and things become not only irrelevant to our search for goodness but also tempt us to stray from our commitment to be free from bias. Moral laws, rather than our relationships to the world, become the substance of ethical life. If my child, for example, were injured and calling for me to ease her pain, the deontologist dictates that I must go to her aid *because* I am compelled by cold moral laws. This is very different than being compelled by the actuality of her particular appeals and suffering. Once we bracket all of our inclinations and relationships to the world in the quest for ethical objectivity, what we determine to be ethically justifiable has no motivating force. As Bernstein explains, 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.”¹³ Thus ethics do not move us. Adorno and Levinas each respond to this divorce of ethical abstraction and practical action by investing the material of ethical life with the inherent power to move us. According to Bernstein, Adorno’s negative dialectics attempt to bridge this gap between reason and objects by recognizing “the normative authority of the factual.”¹⁴ In other words, Adorno seeks to redirect the attention of ethics away from ethical argumentation and back to the force of the suffering things in the world. Accordingly, Bernstein introduces “is living” as the “material a priori predicate” implied within all of Adorno’s invectives.¹⁵ Levinas makes a parallel move, agreeing with Adorno that the death camps are distinctive not simply because they exemplified the utter failure of abstract moral laws, but because they systematically drained the prisoners’ of their ethical status by reducing them to subhumans to whom the

guards would feel no responsibility. As Levinas recounts, even he doubted if he was still human during his detention.¹⁶ Although Levinas would not phrase it in this way, Adorno and Levinas each see the holocaust as deactivating the material inferences proper between Nazis and their victims by extending the disenchantment of nature to humans. This particular form of degradation was no accident, as Himmler trained the SS to develop the “coldness” required to suppress any vestigial empathy they might feel to “the piles of bodies which mass extermination requires.”¹⁷

Given this, concrete things become essential to our highest forms of understanding. Only particular objects can present their unique truths. When positive knowledge proves an ineffective recourse because the incommensurable slips through any conceptual schema, discursive language is not equipped to contain the truth of the Other. We cannot separate knowledge of the non-identical from an actual experience of it, just as we cannot have an experience of the beauty of a painting without actually viewing it. The meaning of alterity can only be expressed within the “trace” of the non-identical itself, making the truth of the Other non-paraphrasable. Just as aesthetics provides the philosophical supplement to art that brings subject and object into a relationship, ethical phenomenology supplements the epiphany of the face. While for Adorno philosophy needs the sensual and particular truth of the art object, the lesson of the face likewise “cannot be discovered in the Self by any introspection.”¹⁸ Aesthetic theory and what has come to be called Levinasian “deconstructive prayer” attempt to make the impossible translation of the incommunicable experience of otherness into ideas, and both of these discourses cannot proceed monologically but rather require their object of genuflection.¹⁹ Because knowledge of alterity cannot be carried away from the incommensurable itself, philosophy comes to depend upon a dialogue with what it occludes. Knowledge of the non-identical must not only pass through the incommensurable object but must always remain tethered to it. While the importance of conversation between the Same and the face seems intuitive enough, Adorno takes this dialogical relation between subject and object so seriously that at times he can sound like a panpsychist: “If the thought really yielded to the object, if its attention were on the object, not its category, the very objects would start talking under the lingering eye.”²⁰ Adorno and Levinas agree that ethical life begins not by analyzing the world with abstract moral concepts, but by listening carefully to the muffled but rich sources of meaning embedded just under the surface of instrumental life.

We must note, however, that Adorno and Levinas also agree that we do not directly experience the non-identical or the Other but rather only its vestige. For Adorno, we only confront the semblance of the non-identical in the work of modern art. For Levinas, the “face is the trace of the utterly bygone, utterly

absent.”²¹ As an experience of the trace, the confrontation with the Other is only a direct confrontation with its absence.²² While it “plays the role of a sign” and “can be taken for a sign,” a “trace is not a sign like any other.”²³

Lastly, Adorno and Levinas share an unpopular refusal to translate their denunciations of violence into programmatic political theories. Despite the continued centrality of class struggle and other Marxian notions to Adorno’s work, for him “even the best intentioned reformer who uses an impoverished and debased language to recommend renewal, by his adoption of the insidious mode of categorization and the bad philosophy it conceals, strengthens the very power of the order he is trying to break.”²⁴ Political movements depend upon the abstract classification of people, and these classifications indubitably result in categorization, repression, and domination.²⁵ The two central categories of political theory, namely the subject and the community, operate on the reductive fallacies of identity thinking and therefore accommodate the status quo by pretending to offer relief when in fact no actual freedom from identity thinking occurs.²⁶ Thus whatever advance is won within politics entails a regression in the struggle against identity thinking.²⁷ Levinas concurs in this belief that politics are inextricable from a totalizing viewpoint. As “[t]he art of foreseeing war and winning it by every means, politics . . . is opposed to morality, as philosophy to naiveté.”²⁸ Politics unavoidably conflates alterity with the self by organizing and codifying the infinite, and therefore no political action can avoid committing conceptual violence *en masse*. As soon as one thinks of responsibilities to the many, the Other will then become a representative of one generic citizen among many. The experience of the radical particularity of the Other which commands me must act will be lost as my thoughts move from my immediate responsibilities to the Other into organizational considerations of the community. We revert to a unified ontology, and thus for Levinas “[p]olitical totalitarianism rests on an ontological totalitarianism.”²⁹ This is not to say that Adorno and Levinas were not personally engaged with political causes – as they both surely were to some extent – but rather that they blocked the conversion of ethics into a political program on the ethical grounds.³⁰ This resistance to politics has caused innumerable difficulties for progressive theorists compelled by Adorno and Levinas’ critiques of instrumental reason but handcuffed by their renunciation of political movements.

3. Evaluating points of contention

Considering that Adorno and Levinas share these broad and once exotic arguments, it has been tempting to conflate their work into the generalized

theory of alterity favored within some corners of Continental philosophy and cultural studies. Once we make the tensions between Adorno and Levinas explicit, however, it becomes evident that we cannot simultaneously affirm considerable portions of their work. To begin, the location where the Other appears provides the most conspicuous disagreement between Adorno and Levinas. Only the face of the human Other – the living second person capable of suffering – signifies alterity for Levinas. Only the face can look back at us and thereby announce its status as something more than an object for our use. The face possesses the exclusive privilege of initiating inexhaustible responsibility, and this authority flows from its unrivaled capacity to embody infinity and ultimately provide “an access to the idea of God.”³¹ For Levinas, therefore, Adorno’s claim that modern art is to be experienced as if it represents the incommensurable in-itself would be a form of idolatry. Genuflection upon art would be still more scandalous to Levinas when elaborated by Benjamin’s claim, which Adorno approvingly cites, that art not only presents the Other but actually returns our gaze: “To experience the aura of a phenomenon means to invest it with the ability to look at us in turn.”³² The divergence appears quite dramatic, with Adorno elevating modern works to perhaps the final appearance of non-instrumental meaning and Levinas leveling what can appear to be a fanatical denunciation of art. Levinas’ relationship to art has received significant critical attention, and I should proceed with some caution so as not to oversimplify what Jill Robbins has described as the “tension” between Levinas’ accounts of ethics and art and to forestall responses that I have failed to consider the “evolution” of his aesthetic theory in his late works.³³

The vituperative tone of Levinas’ early writings on aesthetics can seem quite jarring, particularly his 1948 essay “Reality and its Shadow.”³⁴ Here Levinas describes art as a kind of false idol, disguised as an Other to divert our glance from the face. Art, he writes, “is the very event of obscuring, a descent into the night, an invasion of the shadow.”³⁵ Such a “magic” conversion of the human into the inhuman performs a “doping of the senses,” and under this spell we mistakenly genuflect before the “bewitched,” “bloodless,” and “awkward” imitation of life.³⁶ Art’s “caricature” of life “turns into something tragic”³⁷ as it “manifests itself in its stupidity as an idol.”³⁸ Thus, Levinas claims, “[a]rt then lets go of the prey for the shadow.”³⁹ Likewise, the chicanery of art distorts the temporality of suffering. “To say that an image is an idol,” Levinas claims, “is to affirm that every image is in the last analysis plastic, and that every artwork is in the end a statue – a stoppage of time.”⁴⁰ Art renews Lot’s curse, freezing beings into “pillars of salt.”⁴¹ “The petrification of the instant in the heart of duration,” Levinas argues, “is the greatest obsession of the artist.”⁴² The work does not exist in time, but rather as paralyzed and trapped in a netherworld of silence. Eternally damned to an “empty interval,”

images are “buried alive” to subsist as the “monstrous and inhuman.”⁴³ Unlike the face of the Other, these ossified creatures do not speak or command a response. “By creating beauty out of nature, art calms and quietens it,” and thus, “[a]ll the arts, even those based on sound, create silence.”⁴⁴ An ethical conversation cannot spring from “the beautiful, whose essence is indifference, cold splendor and silence,”⁴⁵ and therefore “evil powers are conjured by filling the world with idols which have mouths but do not speak.”⁴⁶ The very structure of aesthetic completion gags conversation: the “artist stops because the work refuses to accept anything more, appears saturated” and therefore the work cannot “give itself out as the beginning of a dialogue.”⁴⁷ As a result, aesthetic contemplation stalls ethical inquiry: “Do not speak, do not reflect, admire in silence and peace – such are the counsels of wisdom satisfied before the beautiful.”⁴⁸ Because artworks cannot be interlocutors, they “lack[] the force to rouse realities.”⁴⁹ Thus “art, as essentially disengaged, constitutes, in a world of initiative and responsibility, a dimension of evasion.”⁵⁰ The demand for the autonomy of art “situates art above reality and recognizes no master for it, and it is immoral inasmuch as it liberates the artist from his duties as a man and ensures him of a pretentious and facile nobility.”⁵¹ Allowing for the suspension of responsibility, art “offers consolation rather than challenge.”⁵² The following invective exemplifies Levinas’ early diatribes against art: “There is something wicked and egoistic and cowardly in artistic enjoyment. There are times when one can be ashamed of it, as of feasting during a plague.”⁵³

We cannot dismiss these passages as the rants of an aesthetic philistine.⁵⁴ Levinas offered an increasingly refined account of modern art that mirrors much of Adorno’s *Aesthetic Theory*. He comes to claim that art “fissures”⁵⁵ and “deforms”⁵⁶ experience, creating a world where the “particular stands out in the nakedness of its being.”⁵⁷ The most accomplished paintings offer insight “more profound than that of knowledge unveiled in truth.”⁵⁸ Fiction and poetry exceed the image-restricted visual arts in their relation to alterity. In Proust’s narratives, “persons and things remain absolutely indeterminate,” and Levinas describes the *Story of Albertine* as “the account of the way the inner life looms forth from an insatiable curiosity about the alterity of the Other that is both empty and inexhaustible.”⁵⁹ Something remains hidden in Proust’s characters, and his greatest contribution “consists in situating reality in a relation with something which forever remains other.”⁶⁰ Poetry, as the “discontinuous and contradictory language of scintillation,” offers the greatest potential among the arts.⁶¹ With its “sign made from afar, . . . [p]oetry can be said to transform words, the tokens of the whole, the moments of a totality, into unfettered signs, breaching the walls of immanence, disrupting order.”⁶² Blanchot, read by Levinas as a philosophical poet, appears to achieve the ultimate aim of discourse in his texts when the “[s]aying lets go of what it

grasps.”⁶³ Levinas even anticipates Adorno’s logic of the absolute commodity and its critical powers.⁶⁴

Such statements lead some to argue that Levinas believes that there could be “artists of alterity,”⁶⁵ and Derrida has gone so far as to claim that “[b]ecause of all the challenges to the commentator and the critic, *Totality and Infinity* is a work of art and not a treatise.”⁶⁶ Levinas did soften his reception of art through his career, yet consistencies remain. Edith Wyschogrod queried Levinas directly on the ethical status of art in an interview dated December 31, 1982, which would be rather late in the development of his ideas. She asked: “In some recent observations on the subject of poetry you said that poetry belongs to saying rather than the said. Do you think art, especially contemporary art, places ontology in question? After all Kant [did] say in the *Third Critique* that beauty like morality can be something disinterested?”⁶⁷ He responded by explaining that there “is goodness in beauty; [but] there is certainly an idolatrous moment in art, I think. The idolatrous moment is very strong. Or, if you will, in the end the good that is in it is absorbed by the form.”⁶⁸ Likely aware that this brief summary could not account for the details of his aesthetic theory, he refers the interviewer to an earlier text: “I wrote something some time ago, “Reality and its Shadow” where this is very clear.”⁶⁹ Although the ambiguity in many of his later works might lead to the impression that he had fundamentally altered his position, here Levinas reaffirms his earliest and most unabashed condemnations of art. Wyschogrod pressed the point by asking whether art can “go beyond” this structure of completion and thereby become a saying rather than the said. Again Levinas was clear: “Go beyond it? Not go beyond it so much as to see that it is part of the truth. One can’t make a prayer out of Pushkin, but he is, after all, quite lofty.”⁷⁰ While his tone now lacks the earlier opprobrium, Levinas continued to relegate art to the order of the said because of his persistent view of the nature of art: “a work of art would not belong to art if it did not have this formal structure of completion.”⁷¹ Like science, art is a means parading as an end. “Beauty,” he believes, “introduces a new finality, an internal finality, into this naked world. To disclose by science and by art is essentially to clothe the elements with signification. . .to find for it a place in the whole by apperceiving its function or its beauty.”⁷² Unlike Kant’s purposeless and disinterested beauty, Levinas understands the demarcation of beauty – as it reaches finitude in its completion – as a moment of categorization and instrumentalization. These views endure throughout the equivocal treatment of art *Otherwise than Being*, where Levinas continues to view art as “the preeminent exhibition in which the said is reduced to a pure theme, to absolute exhibition, even to the shameless capable of holding all looks for which it is exclusively destined.”⁷³ In art,

the “said is reduced to the Beautiful, which supports Western ontology.”⁷⁴ While some works may “keep awake” the said, they can never be sayings.⁷⁵ Such a non-dialogical entity cannot initiate an ethical relationship and thus art remains a kind of taxidermy of life throughout Levinas’ work.

Whereas Levinas believes the Kantian aesthetic tradition offers “not the disinterestedness of contemplation but of irresponsibility,” Adorno finds that the notion of purposiveness without a purpose preserves a semblance of non-instrumental value.⁷⁶ As philosophers historically ghettoized art because of its apparent lack of objectivity, it was allowed a greater degree of autonomy from identity thinking than the study of epistemology and ethics. As we seek alternatives to instrumental rationality, “the irrationality of art is becoming rational.”⁷⁷ Adorno’s critique of identity thinking turns to art because of the ability of individual works to appear to convey meaning in their very concrete particularity. Abstract classifications cannot contain the indexical meaning presented by a work, and the truth of an object is seen as inseparable from an experience of its particularity. Art dramatizes that gap between concept and object, and the remainder to conceptualization occasions reflection on the nature of our cognitive habits. Adorno measures the success of modern art by its ability to press us against the limits of our understanding. Great modernist works “constantly practic[e] the impossible trick of trying to identify the non-identical” and thereby remind us of the transgressions of identity thinking and present a cognitive insight beyond the capacity of philosophy alone.⁷⁸

Thus in Adorno and Levinas we find opposing and extreme estimations of modern art: it is either our fleeting hope or a “wicked and egoistic and cowardly” disgrace.⁷⁹ Adorno finds that modernist works can – or at least could within the cultural period in which he wrote – interrupt our instrumental habits of cognition because of their ability to *appear* truly strange, beyond simple conceptualization, and therefore concrete and particular. A work like *Endgame* presents something even more foreign and enigmatic than the human face, in large part because our social and economic structures have so desensitized us to the suffering of others. While faces have become banal, for Adorno art could still hint at insights distinct from what concepts can know by presenting us with the semblance of non-instrumental meaning and value. The art object looks back at us from the other side of our framework of abstract classifications, presenting the illusion of a protest against identitarianism. As I have argued elsewhere, it is difficult to take Adorno’s claims regarding the critical power of modern art seriously within a culture in which even the most inaccessible art lives comfortably as a fully commodified good.⁸⁰ If art no longer performs this role, then our contemporary situation is bleaker than Adorno diagnosed. But from Levinas’ perspective, even the suggestion that

art objects could possess the “ability to look at us in return” commits a degrading anthropomorphism that bows before dead art rather than living humans.⁸¹ Levinas would believe Adorno’s assertion that aesthetic experience approximates the experience of being “in the presence of the other” has forgotten that the awe produced by the Other derives not from its simple resistance to conceptual exhaustion, but from its ability to speak and suffer. The representation of alterity could never, for Levinas, supplant the raw command of the face.

We might expect art criticism to fall in line behind art as still further distanced from the face, but for Levinas criticism better takes up the task of keeping the said alive for one precise reason: “art offers images, whereas criticism speaks.”⁸² Only in living words does the saying incessantly breach the said, and Levinas contrasts this effort to keep language animate from the mortifying labor of the artist.⁸³ “The use of the word wrenches experience out of its aesthetic self-sufficiency,” and therefore “criticism, which is the word of a living being speaking to a living being, brings the image in which art revels back to the fully real being.”⁸⁴ “Language or criticism takes us out of our dreams,” resuscitating the timeless and soporific world of art.⁸⁵ Although criticism may seem parasitic on a dead art object, it “exists as a public’s mode or comportment” when they are “not content with being absorbed in aesthetic enjoyment” and thus feel “an irresistible need to speak.” The critic “can be defined as the one that still has something to say when everything has been said.”⁸⁶ The critic’s “need to enter into a relation with someone, in spite of and over and above the peace and harmony derived from the successful creation of beauty is what we call the necessity of critique.”⁸⁷ Such critique “represent[s] the intervention . . . necessary for integrating the inhumanity and inversion of art into human life and mind.”⁸⁸

What becomes evident, however, is that the actual work provoking the criticism contributes little to the value of the critical undertaking. This sharply contrasts with Adorno’s claim that philosophy requires the art object because only it can suggest, in the confrontation with its brute particularity, meaning in the gap between the work and conceptualizations of it. Whatever insight resides within art cannot be taken away from its material instantiation and transported to exclusively philosophical terrain. Only within the object can its truth survive. Albrecht Wellmer explains: “Just as a moment of blindness adheres to the immediacy of aesthetic intuition, a moment of emptiness adheres to the ‘mediacy’ of philosophical thought; only in tandem can they approximate a truth which neither of them can express.”⁸⁹ Philosophy cannot paraphrase the sensuousness presented by the work, leaving *Aesthetic Theory* with the task of mediating the relationship between what art elicits and what philosophy cannot depose into conceptual knowledge. Thus whereas Adorno

believes philosophy depends on the art object and art depends on philosophy to give voice to its unspeakable particularly, Levinas believes art provides little more than an occasion for critical interface.

I consider below why Adorno believes art possessed – and probably has since lost – critical force *only because of* the social and historical context in which it lives, but in order to account for Levinas’ denigration of art we must unpack his understanding of the face as transcendent in a manner in which even the most accomplished artwork could never be. If we recall that art also fails to be non-instrumental for Adorno because of its limits as a mere semblance of the non-identical, Adorno and Levinas share a surprisingly similar view of art. But while Adorno argues that the illusion of the thing in itself in the modern work of art is the closest we can come to the non-identical given our current cognitive habits, Levinas believes we can indeed do better. Levinas roots his contention that aesthetics fixates on the wrong object in a belief that a more authentic form of alterity – the face of the Other – is available to us. While for Adorno nothing *really* breaks through instrumental reason, according to Levinas the face does just this because its otherworldliness-in-the-world is absolutely transcendent. Levinas finds the transcendence of the face to be “primary” and “essential” to his thought,⁹⁰ holding that “the face is the unique openness in which the signifyingness of the transcendent does not nullify the transcendence and make it enter into an immanent order; here on the contrary transcendence refuses immanence precisely as the ever bygone transcendence of the transcendent.”⁹¹ The bygone element of the face – now commonly referred to as its absence in its presence – likewise descends from the heights of the transcendental, for “[o]nly a being that transcends the world, an absolute being, can leave a trace.”⁹² The Other, appearing as the trace of the face, owes its “wonder. . .to the elsewhere from which it comes and into which it already withdraws.”⁹³ Language enters into a relationship with the face such that “the other, despite the relationship with the same, remains transcendent to the same.”⁹⁴ Apologetic conversation “inclines before the transcendent.”⁹⁵ The face provides a window to the transcendent, and Levinas’ ethical phenomenology candidly relies on this bold claim to orient his understanding of ethics as first philosophy.

At first glance, Adorno appears to have the inferior position in this exchange because of Levinas’ appeal to our intuition that the human face holds a far stronger ethical charge than mere art. Whereas the face holds a primal draw, the anthropomorphism of Adorno’s aesthetic theory seems to suffer from a case of abstraction-itis possibly contracted from his extended sojourns into the rarefied climates of elitist modernism. But now the obvious question arises: how do we know that face provides access to transcendent infinity rather than to a behavioral signal, a normatively neutral thing-in-itself, or an empty

nothingness? Why should we believe that our respect for the face amounts to more than a bias for that which is ultimately like us? How can we know that egoism, dualism, speciesism, or the culturally conditioned preference for the individual human above all else do not motivate the intuition and color the phenomenology? The possibilities of what lies beyond our concepts, it would seem, are both limitless and unknowable. How, then, can we know at least one ontological property of this infinity of the Other: that it is charged with an inexhaustible ethical force? And why is only the human Other endowed with this power? Should we allow Levinas to heap a mountain of theory unto this fragile cornerstone without a bit more reassurance of its stability?⁹⁶ Levinas claims that the boundlessness of the Other cannot be a cognitive incompleteness of an “unfilled thought,” but rather must spring from the “absolute status” of the essentially transcendent.⁹⁷ Yet this seems unsatisfying because he asserts that the means of establishing the priority of the Other “will resemble transcendental method” but he never provides a convincing transcendental argument.⁹⁸ Of course the very idea of a “convincing transcendental argument” is suspect within Levinas’ work because he rejects transcendental argumentation as an instrument of violence, but we still seek some sort of compelling account of the authority of the Other. Instead, he introduces the neologism of “Illeity,” which appears to cause more problems than it solves.

Literally “He-ness,” according to Levinas “illeity . . . makes the word God be pronounced, without letting ‘divinity’ be said.”⁹⁹ Levinas often substitutes Illeity for God in part to resist the onto-theological, and anthropomorphic notions associated with the latter while continuing to endorse the “Infinite” which always already commands me. Ethical responsibility, for Levinas, begins with God because it is the “Illeity of God who sends me to serve my neighbor, to responsibility for him.”¹⁰⁰ However sophisticated a conception of divinity Levinas explicates, the “He” Levinas refers to in Illeity is unquestionably some version of God. At a minimum, God is used here to refer to the type of transcendental infinity that obligates and commands rather than a mathematical infinity that merely extends beyond our ability to think it. Leaving aside the rightfully infamous problems created by Levinas’ demarcation of that which is beyond all categorization with the masculine pronoun, Illeity comes to provide the lynchpin for his philosophical arguments.¹⁰¹ Because many Continental philosophers find more inspiration in *Beyond Good and Evil* than the *Old Testament*, this creates unease. Consider the following passage from “Meaning and Sense”:

To be in the image of God does not mean to be an icon of God but to find oneself in his trace. The revealed God of our Judeo-Christian spirituality maintains all the infinity of his absence, which is in the personal “order”

itself. He shows himself only by his trace, as is said in Exodus 33. To go toward him is not to follow his trace, which is not a sign; it is to go toward the Others who stand in the trace of illeity. It is through this illeity, situated beyond the calculations and reciprocities of economy and of the world, that being has a sense. A sense which is not a finality.¹⁰²

It becomes evident that the Other's transcendence does not arise from of the enigmatic nature of its concrete particularity but instead results from a supplement added to its trace from on high. Rather than being the absolute itself, the face is but a vessel for the veiled expression of illeity. Levinas' assertion that "the enigma comes to us from Illeity" contributes to this sense of the force of the Other being channeled from above.¹⁰³ While Levinasians are correct to assert that Levinas did strictly identify the Other with God, he does not deny that the normative power of the Other is generated by God. The emphatic redundancy from *Entre Nous* leaves little room for doubt in this regard:

When I speak to a Christian, I always quote Matthew 25; the relation to God is presented there as a relation to another person. It is not a metaphor: in the other, there is a real presence of God. In my relation to the other, I hear the Word of God. It is not a metaphor; it is not only extremely important, it is literally true. I'm not saying that the other is God, but that in his or her Face I hear the Word of God.¹⁰⁴

Recalling that the ability to speak raises the face above art – and animals as we will discuss later – we see that human speech is privileged because it utters no less than the "Word of God." "God is personal," Levinas continues, "insofar as He brings about interpersonal relations between myself and my neighbors."¹⁰⁵ Peperzak summarizes how there can be no path to transcendence for Levinas without God leading the way: "The only chance of contacting God, the only possibility for 'transcendence,' is walking in the trace he or it left, a trace that always leads to a human face."¹⁰⁶ All forms of otherness, in other words, originate in God.

Surely Levinas' claims are more subtle and less crudely onto-theological than these select citations might suggest, but such language provokes suspicions that he preaches a form of dogmatism – albeit a radical and innovative form of dogmatism – to the converted. For a materialist critic like Adorno, such an appeal to transcendence and illeity would mark the end of critical thought. Levinas critiques the very structure of critique only so far, at which point he attributes that which is beyond or overflowing critique with infinite authority over the critic. Alternatively, negative dialectics pursues critical thinking without cradling critique in transcendental security and it therefore

rejects fetishization of anything characterized as beyond thought, unquestionable, or supernatural.¹⁰⁷ In order to demystify the dueling dogmas of religion and scientism, critical self-reflection must be unflinching. Levinas, it seems, blinks first. Remarking upon the transcendental strain within Derrida, J.M. Bernstein has elaborated upon Adorno's refusal of such "placeholder[s] for a tabooed absolute."¹⁰⁸ Whereas Adorno "continues the path of self-reflection against the transcendental," Bernstein charges Derrida and by extension Levinas with "attempt[ing] to avoid self-implication by taking transcendental thought beyond self-reflection."¹⁰⁹ For Adorno, granting critical immunity to any thought or object endows it with precisely the totalizing authority that he and Levinas agree must be resisted. As Adorno warned in *Minima Moralia*, even the "blossoming tree. . . becomes an excuse for an existence of the outrageously unlovely, and there is no beauty or consolation except in the gaze falling on horror, withstanding it, and in unalleviated consciousness of negativity holding fast to the possibility of what is better."¹¹⁰

I am sympathetic to the power of being caught in the gaze of another, feeling as if I lose my egocentrism, and experiencing something like being commanded by the face before me. From this perspective we are amenable to the argument that ethical responsibility springs from the second person, and the suggestive power of Levinas' phenomenological account contributes to this perception. Because the Other's face grips us before we can cognitively process the broader social meaning of its presence and the attendant responsibilities, we are further inclined to believe that perhaps ethics should be first philosophy. But here we should remember Adorno and Levinas' shared refusal to allow the ultimate questions asking "Why" to be silenced by the arrogance of egocentric thought. Levinas allows himself at least one positive answer to an ultimate "Why" that negative dialectics could not sanction. Why does the face hold a positive and infinite ethical charge? It holds such power, Levinas answers, because of its relationship with Illeity. Without this, the face would be but another non-identical and we would have no conclusive reason to beach dialectics on its shores. Levinas' appeal to the Other as transcendent should incite the mistrust Adorno calls for "in face of all spontaneity, impetuosity, all letting oneself go."¹¹¹ Thus Adorno warns: "If thought. . . gropes beyond itself in such a way that it names the other as something simply incommensurable with it, it will find no shelter but in the dogmatic tradition."¹¹² Thus even negative dialectics must be dialectical by confronting its own experience of the non-identical: "It lies in the definition of negative dialectics that it will not come to rest in itself, as if it were total."¹¹³ The identity ultimately made between identity and non-identity through dialectical work must itself admit its own non-identical moment, what we might awkwardly call the non-identity of identity and non-identity. Non-identity reintroduces itself at all

levels of abstraction to problematize the operative concepts. The only way for dialectics to avoid seizing into a dogmatic set of absolute principles is to be both dialectical and undialectical.¹¹⁴ Although spatial constraints prevent discussing how Adorno believes this unfolds in speculative identification, these differences between Adorno and Levinas' attitudes toward their methods and object of study are noteworthy.

I should note the recent effort to draw Adorno closer to Levinas with respect to what can loosely be described as their theological views.¹¹⁵ Robert Hullot-Kentor claims that "theology penetrates every word" and "is always moving right under the surface of all Adorno's writings,"¹¹⁶ and Cohen and de Vries make extensive use of Adorno's interest in the biblical prohibition against graven images and pronouncing the Name. Most famously, Adorno concluded *Minima Moralia* with a call to fashion perspectives "that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indigent and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light."¹¹⁷ Such a reference to "the messianic" does not rely upon transcendence but rather taps our stockpile of clichés for an analogy to a just world. Adorno mines the tropes available to us from within our social and historical context for heuristic devices capable of presenting an image of reconciliation. He calls on religious traditions to this effect just as he invokes the Kantian kingdom of ends. At not point, however, do these references float freely from a historically grounded critique of commodity fetishism, nihilism, scientism, fascism, and other cultural dangers liquidating rationality. Adorno remained consistent in his view: "The turn toward transcendence functions as a screen-image for immanent, societal helplessness."¹¹⁸ Though pessimistic, negative dialectics never resorted to transcendence as a saving power.

These considerations underscore Levinas' lack of concern with the context in which we find the Other as it compares to Adorno's refusal to consider the non-identical outside of its historical and sociological environment.¹¹⁹ Adorno charts the movement of the non-identical through its historical conditions, so that even the dialectical method itself must lay its origins bare and "in one final movement turn itself even against itself."¹²⁰ Any philosophy that fails to do so "will always sound to the subject like a transcendent dogma."¹²¹ As an anthropologically situated concept, the non-identical originates in the drive for survival, evolves into the economy of ritual sacrifice, reifies in universal commodification, and endures an afterlife in the modern work of art. The crises Adorno diagnoses arise historically, creating a sociological rather than a transcendental dilemma. While Levinas provides such elegant accounts of what increasingly appears to be a heavenly engagement with the Other, Adorno makes sense of the gritty details of modernity. Adorno accounts for the central features of life in a post-holocaust culture increasingly ordered by capitalism:

meaning is lost as cosmological narratives deflate, scientific rationality piles on reasons why our lives and suffering are irrelevant, and the money economy makes the most insidious forms of abstract classification global and compulsory. This account of the causal social relationships between identity thinking, instrumental rationality, and domination contextualizes alterity in a manner unavailable to Levinasian ethical phenomenology. Perhaps most importantly, Adorno pieces together how identity thinking enables the coldness necessary to compete within the ruthless struggles of capitalism and war. Considering the power of these social forces, Levinas' attempt to recuperate illeity and recast philosophy as "prayer" can seem like a desperate attempt to find peace amongst such horrors.¹²² One can imagine Adorno casting Levinasianism under the same shadow as the occult, which is also driven to irrationality by a longing for the absolute meaning once provided by religion.¹²³ From this perspective, transcendence is a social-psychological projection covering our eyes as nihilism chases philosophy back to mythology.

Negative dialectics and their preoccupation with the non-identical and the work of art operate only because of and within their cultural framework. As Peter Dews has argued, "pure singularity is itself an abstraction, the waste product of identity-thinking" that rises to such philosophical importance as a corrective counter-measure to modernity.¹²⁴ Adorno levels a version of this argument in his "Lyric Poetry and Society," and his comments there apply with equal force to Levinas' transcendental Other.¹²⁵ Purporting to stand in opposition to society and to have "escaped from the weight of material existence," lyric poetry "evoke[s] the image of a life free from the coercion of reigning practices, utility, of the restless pressures of self-preservation."¹²⁶ Adorno, however, exposes this longing for another world as itself a social product. The demand for what transcends contemporary culture already reveals its discontented roots within culture, for it "implies a protest against a social situation that every individual experiences as hostile, alien, cold, oppressive, and this situation is imprinted in reverse on the poetic work."¹²⁷ The transcendental component of lyric poetry is "a form of reaction to the reification of the world, to the domination of human beings by commodities that has developed . . . since the industrial revolution became the dominant force in life."¹²⁸ Thus, "even resistance to social pressure is not something absolutely individual," but rather results from "objective forces . . . that are part of the constitution of the whole and not at all merely forces of a rigid individuality blindly opposing society."¹²⁹ The "inner life" of art can only be interrogated through considerations of its relation to the outside world, until the interiority of art and the exteriority of the world are themselves in question.¹³⁰ Therefore the "fact that art has a critical edge in society is itself socially determined."¹³¹ Art plays this enigmatic role only because its characteristics, as beyond concepts and free

from desire, coincide with a world overrun with concepts and instrumental desire and thus sorely lacking their opposite.

Levinas' Other plays a similar role in our academic culture. The domination of all things by the pressure of instrumental reason causes us to desire the various forms of its opposite: freedom, non-violence, or particularity. The Other appeals to us because it offers the hope of re-enchanted human life, a meaningful ethical code, and even a glancing look at a God whose death we continue to mourn. Rudi Visker recently speculated that social reasons explain why "our culture is so eager to talk about what is other from it or to it, and why, in making this move to alterity, [it has] so monotonously repeated the message that this 'Other' is somehow a good other. . . ."¹³² Western philosophy's entwinement with racism and Occidentalism – which are inseparable from broader social and economic transgressions – partially accounts for this "obsession."¹³³ But a critical response to such injustices cannot consist of piously looking to an unthinkable. We must question everything, no matter how unsatisfying the answers, or else thought comes to an authoritarian end. As Adorno puts it with his usual zeal: "expressions of life that seemed exempt from the responsibility of thought, not only have an element of defiant silliness, of callous refusal to see, but directly serve their diametrical opposite."¹³⁴ One can imagine Adorno finding parallels here not only to the occult, but also to the student movements of the 1960s which he so famously rebuffed for their inevitable complicity with what they hoped to resist. The more desperate we become in the material world, the greater our desire to seek out another and affirm its structures of meaning. Philosophical and aesthetic resistance share this tendency: "the more heavily the situation weighs upon it, the more firmly the work resists it by refusing to submit to anything heteronymous and constituting itself in accordance with its own laws."¹³⁵

Likewise, although both Adorno and Levinas argue that ethical responsibility should not be subordinated to survival itself, we should appreciate Adorno's sense that the motivations underlying repressive identification are strongest in times of fear and competition. It will be most difficult, but perhaps most critical, to genuflect before and bracket instrumentalizations of another when her boot is on my throat. Political circumstances condition cognitive habits, and, as current events have made clear, a perceived threat from members of a class will cause that category to be reinforced rather than dissolved. Constitutive feedback reverberates between political systems and the cognitive behavior of citizens, and any hope to reform ethical and cognitive habits must be mindful of the dialectic between ethics and politics. Levinas' assertion of the radical transcendence of the Other leaves us looking to the heavens for the absolute origin from which this "angelic" being has sprung, rather than scrutinizing the earth that creates and dominates the Other.¹³⁶ Whereas

Adorno implicates us as originating from and perpetuating in machinery of global capital, Levinas suggests parallels between the failures of philosophy and original sin.

This can be restated in terms of Levinas' failure to consider the dialectical constitution of the Other. Levinas understands the Other as a "bareness without any cultural adornment," yet I doubt that any being can exist independently as a brute force free from constitutive relationships and concepts.¹³⁷ Because "subject and object are not rigid and isolated poles but can be defined only in the process in which they distinguish themselves from one another,"¹³⁸ Adorno would consider Levinas' "being beyond relation" a kind of mythological creature.¹³⁹ While Adorno makes clear that "the free floating subject is an illusion, because the social totality is objectively prior to the individual,"¹⁴⁰ and that therefore "we must concede the object's dialectical primacy," this primacy must be genuinely dialectical.¹⁴¹ It cannot be bound to an absolute. Adorno does not simply convert idealism, the generation of object by subject, into materialism, the generation of subject from object. While much of the subject is a product of the culture industry, it also remains the vehicle of cognition and therefore drives negative dialectics. This accounts for the rationalist strain remaining in Adorno that allows for a critique of Enlightenment only with the damaged tools of Enlightenment. "Dialectical thought" therefore, "is an attempt to break through the coercion of logic by its own means."¹⁴² 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."¹⁴³ As Simon Jarvis explains this interdependence, "the only way to do justice to the priority of the object is by pushing subjectively mediated identifications to the point where they collapse."¹⁴⁴ Thus negative dialectics are to be undertaken by a cognitive being uncertain of both its subjectivity and the objectivity of the thing it contemplates. Once non-identity thinking muddies the tidy boundaries between abstract classifications, ontological and causal lines blur. By contrast, Levinas' Same and Other seem to be born fully grown, without developmental interaction with each other. They then live in hermetic isolation, touching only through distant traces. By contrast, the identical and the non-identical become increasingly difficult to separate as dialectical inquiry intensifies.

Adorno also distrusts phenomenology as a source of meaning. For Levinas, the experience of the Other is entirely concrete and unmediated *even in its absence or trace*. The face comes directly before us free from any obstructions, and this raw experience of the trace of transcendence cannot be blurred or degraded by the influence of institutions upon our perceptions. In his account of "the withering of experience," Adorno understands phenomenology as the study of a world of experience that no longer exists. When we are conditioned

to understand the world instrumentally in order to out-compete each other, it can be difficult to appreciate just how desensitized to the face we have become. Just as we do not see living and suffering cows when we buy shrink-wrapped meat, we experience the face of the Other as pre-packaged for our consumption. Even if the Other did project an ethical power before us, our vision, like our ability to hear and think, has deteriorated to such an extent that we would not be able to see it. Levinas seems to argue that if we would just look to the Other we would see and accept our responsibility, but this argument will not persuade a blinded world. Because of the degeneration of experience, Adorno looks for art to provide an encounter wherein we recognize our perceptive failure and inability to see the world non-consumptively. In other words, we experience our inability to experience when the artist presents us with something so bright that it will register to even our dimmed vision. The artist mediates his experience of the lack of experience by foregrounding the non-purposiveness of the work and the underdeterminateness of conceptual analysis. The genius fashions a mediation that clues us in to the fact that not only is art semblance, but so is everything else. Thus while art fails to provide true nature, it can teach us about our alienation from nature. Whether anything further can come from this lesson is a point of debate within Adorno scholarship.¹⁴⁵

An example may be helpful here. If the face is to retain its interruptive capacity, it appears that it must be experienced without cultural mediation. How then should we understand a face reflected in a mirror? First consider whether I can perceive the trace of alterity in myself as I look into a mirror. If alterity can be experienced phenomenologically, why can I not discern it in my own face? If I do find alterity in my own face, then alterity itself becomes a trait I share with the Other. The distance between us is filled in, and we stand together, in Levinas' terms, as "fellow human beings." Alterity cannot survive in this relationship "since transcendence is only possible when the Other (Autrui) is not initially the fellow human being or the neighbor; but when it is very distant, when it is Other, when it is the one with whom initially I have nothing in common. . . ."¹⁴⁶ This would lead us to believe that we cannot experience alterity in our own images. Presumably, the same is true for the Other in that she cannot confront her own otherness in the mirror image. But this is problematic. Setting aside the question of whether I "project" alterity if I am the Other to the Other, we are certain that the Other presents true otherness. But if we assert that neither I nor the Other can experience our own alterity before a mirror, this insinuates that alterity does not reside *within* either of us but rather depends upon the other's perception of us. If this is case, then the Other's otherness does not autochthonously spring from her, but rather becomes Other only in my presence. This again

seems incompatible with the existence of radical otherness because I would hold hostage the Other's very alterity. Likewise, if I stand side by side with the Other before a mirror, will I not experience her alterity in her reflection? Unlike the direct gaze of a human, the tain of the mirror cannot speak, suffer, or command me. This would also appear to be true of all other artifacts left by the other, including video and photographs of her, which is consistent with Levinas' view of art. Considering this example from a Levinasian perspective underscores crucial differences with negative dialectics. Adorno fractures the human experience so completely that he has little difficulty with the notion of being estranged from the mediated image one's own face. With the subject and object so alienated yet indistinguishable, my self-concept will be as fragile as any abstract classification. Unlike Levinas' Same, Adorno's subject must always dialectically confront itself as yet another inscrutable moment. Adorno does not predetermine what – if anything – will rattle cognition, and it could be that my own face strikes me as the most alien presence in my life. Adorno's flexibility when confronted with the always transforming cultural conditions in which the subject struggles with its subjectivity and objectivity thus contrasts with Levinas' rigid insistence that the human face will forever be the true Other.

These disagreements also account for Levinas' treatment of non-human animals and other things.¹⁴⁷ Whereas Adorno finds thought riddled by all concrete particulars, Levinas limits his critique to the categorical violence against the second person. He finds animals, as John Llewelyn recounts from Levinas' famous description of a dog he befriended in the forced labor camp,¹⁴⁸ "too stupid" to merit the ethical consideration afforded to the human Other.¹⁴⁹ This is a peculiar justification given that he devotes so much of his work to challenging the presuppositions of rationalist ethics. This also leads us to wonder if human infants have "ethical faces" for Levinas because they are surely less competent interlocutors than many animals.¹⁵⁰ When he describes animal faces as merely "biological," we can infer that their physicality lacks the transcendence of illeity.¹⁵¹ Consider these claims from *Meaning and Sense*:

This position in a trace, which we have called illeity, does not begin in things, which by themselves do not leave traces but produce effects, that is, remain in the world. When a stone has scratched another stone, the scratch can, to be sure, be taken as a trace, but in fact without the man who held the stone this scratch is but an effect. . . . A cause and an effect, even separated by time, belong to the same world. Everything in things is exposed, even what is unknown in them.¹⁵²

Here Levinas appears to assert that only humans animate life because our infinity makes us not of "the same world." As a gift from illeity, human

intentionality liberates us from brute causation. Despite the innovative arguments Levinas makes to reach this conclusion, it bears an uncomfortable resemblance to old-fashioned speciesism and theological dualism. Levinas asserts a bright ontological line between the human Other and the rest of objects, but Adorno can see no definitive justification for such differentiation. Whether a human, a dog, a fly, a river, or a stone, the object's auratic individuality overflows our abstract classifications and raises normative questions that we cannot answer with certainty. Levinas' human Other is, for him, the "chosen one," but we have no non-dogmatic reason for elevating the non-identity of the human over that of the animal.¹⁵³ We are again reminded of the primal pull of the human face, but how can we conclusively and unconditionally elevate it above all else when the sensual particularity of a leaf is no less enigmatic than that of the stranger. Just as Levinas resists the convenient notions of right and wrong which arbitrarily truncate our infinite responsibility and allow us to feel as if we have discharged our responsibilities once completing "the right thing," Adorno does not see any satisfying means of drawing lines between the types of beings confronting us. Thus Adorno speaks openly of his remorse: "This and nothing else is what compels us to philosophize: the guilt of a life which purely as a fact will strangle other life."¹⁵⁴ Philosophical and ethical integrity requires living with this incertitude.

We can reframe these issues in terms of the relationship between ethics and cognition. For Levinas, ethics is first philosophy. The saying, or the very gesture of interrogation and response, takes priority over the said, or the content of any cognitive insight. This would include the meta-cognitive cognition realized within negative dialectics. The command to speak does not derive from any particular cognitive insight, according to Levinas, but is instead issued transcendently from beyond knowledge. While Adorno shares Levinas' belief that cognition always causes violence, for him ethics and cognition cannot be prioritized. Instead, they remain in a dialectic relationship. When Adorno claims that "classification is a condition for cognition and not cognition itself; cognition in turn dispels classification"¹⁵⁵ and asserts that "[w]e can see through the identity principle, but we cannot think without identifying," he endows cognition with the power to discern the violence of subsumptive classification and to then point beyond this infraction.¹⁵⁶ Cognition depends on identification to function, but it possesses the reflexive ability to then make explicit the elements of its own failure. Understanding violence as violence is a cognitive recognition of the non-identical as it slips past the concept. Ethics therefore requires cognition and cognition cannot be severed from ethics. Cognition carries both the disease of violence and its remedy. Instead of abandoning cognition and baldly asserting the priority of ethics, Adorno pushed thought to become more capacious. "The self-criticism of reason is its

truest morality,” and therefore only within this critical process can a materialist ethics arise.¹⁵⁷

We may then wonder how Adorno’s critique can be ethical if it does not endow the non-identical with the charge of a positive infinity. If *Negative Dialectics* inaugurates the new categorical imperative to “arrange. . . thoughts and actions so that Auschwitz will not repeat itself,” what grounds such a claim? Although I have criticized Levinas for investing the Other with a seemingly unwarranted ethical power, Adorno could be accused of using similar rhetorical tropes – albeit more implicitly – in his account of the non-identical. Bernstein’s arguments for the “normative authority of the factual” address many of these concerns. In his exchange with Brandom’s account of material inference and McDowell’s theory of perceptual experience, Bernstein contends 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.”¹⁵⁸ Thus Bernstein claims that we must undergo an “axial turn” in moral consciousness, and make objects, rather than formal laws, the very material of ethical life.¹⁵⁹ Once objects guide ethical claims, we will find their “normative authority” in the material inferences from the state of affairs to what should be done.¹⁶⁰ Bernstein’s ambitious attempt to make explicit the source of ethical meaning operating in Adorno does not rely upon any transcendental authority, but I have argued elsewhere that this predictably leaves the account vulnerable to the problems associated with relativism.¹⁶¹ We can simplify matters if we find Bernstein’s account unconvincing, charting the causal relationship between identity thinking, instrumental rationality, commodification, and domination. Here the cognitive errors of abstract classification lead to reductive understandings of the world which in turn condition oppressive behavior. Every concept in the contemporary world becomes complicit with the instrumentalization, coercion, exploitation, and inequality of capitalism: “the abstraction implicit in the market system represents the domination of the general over the particular, of society over its captive membership. It is not at all a socially neutral phenomenon. . . . Behind the reduction of men to bearers of exchange value lies the domination of men over men.”¹⁶² Like subject and object, cognitive errors and moral errors can be carved into separate modes of inquiry. Pressing Adorno for further clarification of his ethical commitments would be like asking the same question of Marx, and we can be sure that neither would require transcendence to denounce domination.

These concerns should lead us to question whether the Other in Levinas is ultimately particular at all. As an “as such” rather than an “in particular,” this Other represents a strictly formal category of thought. While Levinas gives his Other a face, although not a body as David Levin notices, it is not distinguished

from all Others. It becomes a generic transcendental absolute.¹⁶³ Levinas can therefore issue a programmatic response: speak and rise to meet your infinite responsibility. The formalism of Levinas' infinity contrasts with the concrete substantiality of the non-identical. Rather than the pre-ordained supplicancy before the Other, a confrontation with the non-identical evokes a response more like the terror of the sublime. "Shudder," Adorno's shorthand for this fear, elicits "responses like real anxiety, a violent drawing back, an almost physical revulsion."¹⁶⁴ Shudder horrifies us by inducing "a sense of being touched by the other,"¹⁶⁵ but rather than radiating the holiness of Levinas' Other, the hand that grabs us from behind in shudder will be disfigured by "the scars of damage and disruption. . ."¹⁶⁶ This moment fractures the ordinary plane of experience because we have no way of knowing how to prepare for an engagement with what cannot be prefigured. Nor do we know what, if anything, will provide the experience. Only when we turn to feel the stare of the non-identical across a distance not traversable by concepts do we sense the cognitive and ethical weight it bears. Whereas Levinas sees the assurance of infinite responsibility across this expanse, Adorno finds a void so deep that its vacuum collapses all of our certainties.

4. Conclusion

I have undoubtedly taken considerable liberties in simplifying Adorno and Levinas' work in order to make the above exchange possible within this space. I hope that this distillation process concentrates the disagreements between them and affords us a sense of just how irreconcilably they differ. Art provides a dramatic test case, emphasizing Levinas' commitment to the transcendental authority of the Other beyond all else because of its unique relation to Illeity. Each of the features directing us to the face originates in its otherworldliness, and this guarantees the Other privileged status above the fray of history and culture. For Adorno, any appeal to that which is beyond culture is driven by dissatisfaction with culture and ultimately reinforces the authoritarianism of that society. Adorno shares Levinas' belief that instrumental rationality leads to domination, but Adorno refuses to divorce cognitive habits from the social, historical, cultural, and economic conditions of modernity. This renders negative dialectics an uncertain and tenebrous path, leaving Adorno to scour the material world for objects appearing alive within this disenchanting age. In contrast, Levinas' acontextual absolutism appears blind to the colossal power of the institutions in which thought finds itself. The authority of Levinas' Other thus seems problematic not only because of its dogmatic origins, but also because of its anemia. Adorno's appeal to modern art is not much healthier,

but it has the advantage having demythologized the causes of its affliction as well as the available nostrums.

Notes

1. See, for example, Hent de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, trans. Geoffrey Hale (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London, 2005); C. Fred Alford, *Levinas, the Frankfurt School, and Psychoanalysis* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003); Josh Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy*, (New York and London: Continuum Press, 2003); Asher Horowitz, "'By a Hair's Breadth': Critique, Transcendence, and the Ethical in Adorno and Levinas," *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 28/2 (2002), pp. 213 – 248, 221.
2. Horowitz, "'By a Hair's Breadth': Critique, Transcendence, and the Ethical in Adorno and Levinas," p. 221.
3. de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*, p. xxii (emphasis in original).
4. Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott (New York: Verso, 1974), p. 50.
5. Sartre would be an illuminating interlocutor in this exchange, but I am inclined to reserve those contrasts for another occasion so that we can concentrate our efforts on this already crowded set of claims.
6. The relationship of the Other standing at a height is clear with Levinas. See Emmanuel Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 11 – 31. J.M. Bernstein maps this asymmetrical relationship onto Adorno's theory of shudder. See J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno* (College Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992), p. 223: "Shudder is the generation of distance and angle with respect to the other: fearful awe is the affective 'spacing' of the other as at a 'distance' from us and 'above' us. Height and distance represent the affective geometry of non-identity." Height may be problematic given the possibility that such elevation suggests transcendence or some version of absolute authority. Bernstein does not invoke this structure in his later work on Adorno's ethics. See *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
7. T.W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum Press, 1992), p. 362.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 17 – 18.
9. It is worth noting that the language of Saying and Said becomes prominent in *Otherwise than Being*, which shifts the terms away from the earlier call and response structure in *Totality and Infinity*.
10. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 260. Bernstein recognizes here that such a reading may contradict Adorno's intentions: "philosophy's mode of conceptual articulation, its speaking speculatively, does not directly betray sensuous particularity, as Adorno sometimes assumes. It is not a betrayal because its speculative truth is neither legislated, posited, nor a reductive statement of fact. It is a betrayal only because it must speak discursively."
11. Levinas, "Essence and Disinterestedness," in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, pp. 109 – 127, 112. See also *ibid.*, p. 113: "Language permits us to utter, be it in betrayal, this outside of being. . . ."

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12. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," in *Emmanuel Levinas: Basic Philosophical Writings*, pp. 33 – 64, 64.
13. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 147.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 316.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 301.
16. Levinas, "Apropos of Buber: Some Notes," in *Outside the Subject*, trans. Michael B. Smith (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), pp. 40 – 48, 47.
17. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 409.
18. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p. 60.
19. Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," in *The Levinas Reader*, trans. Sean Hand, p. 149 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989): "By offering a word, the subject putting himself forward lays himself open and, in a sense, prays."
20. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 30.
21. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p. 60.
22. *Ibid.*
23. *Ibid.*, p. 61.
24. Max Horkheimer and T.W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. John Cumming (New York: Continuum, 1972), p. xiv.
25. See Drucilla Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 39.
26. Iris Marion Young has followed Adorno's critique of the inadequacy and violence of political concepts. See Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," *Social Theory and Practice* 12 (1986), pp. 1 – 26, 1 – 2.
27. See Cornell, *The Philosophy of the Limit*, p. 181:

For Adorno, the 'end of philosophy,' which must come with the full acknowledgment of the horror of the holocaust, left him only with "negative dialectics"... To try to abstractly portray the conditions of redemption, to give form to the hope of reconciliation as if it existed now, only promotes accommodation of a fallen world. As a result, Adorno does not reflect on the conditions of justice and the relation of these conditions to positive law, either through quasi-transcendental inquiry or through empirical analysis. ... [E]ven if his negative dialectics carries with it an ethical message that can be decoded, this message cannot be translated into an account of justice and its relation to law.

28. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 21.
29. Levinas, *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, trans. Sean Hand (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), pp. 206 – 207.
30. For discussions of Adorno and Levinas' relevance to political theory, see Bettina Bergo, *Levinas Between Ethics and Politics: For the Beauty that Adorns the Earth* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2003); Espen Hammer, *Adorno and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005); Lorenz Jäger, *Adorno: A Political Biography*, trans. Stewart Spencer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004); and Howard Caygill, *Levinas and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2002).
31. Levinas, *Ethics and Infinity*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1985), p. 92.
32. Walter Benjamin, *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Verso, 1997), pp. 147 – 148.
33. Jill Robbins, *Altered Reading: Levinas and Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999).

34. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," in *The Levinas Reader*, pp. 130 – 143.
35. *Ibid.*, p. 132.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 138.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
39. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
40. *Ibid.*, p. 137.
41. Levinas, "The Servant and Her Master," in *The Levinas Reader*, p. 155.
42. Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," in *The Levinas Reader*, p. 149.
43. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 140.
44. Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," p. 147. Levinas qualifies this estimation of sound a page later:

In sound, and in the consciousness termed hearing, there is in fact a break with the self-complete world of vision and art. In its entirety, sound is a ringing, clanging scandal. Whereas in vision, form is wedded to content in such a way as to appease it, in sound the perceptible quality overflows so that form can no longer contain its content. A real rent is produced in the world, through which the world that is here prolongs a dimension that cannot be converted into vision.

45. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 193.
46. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 141.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
49. *Ibid.*
50. *Ibid.*
51. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 142.
54. Sean Hand, for example, claims that Levinas has "thematized" and "fetishized" art, thus falling into an "easy moralism" against it. See Sean Hand, "Shadowing Ethics: Levinas's View of Art and Aesthetics" in *Facing the Other: The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Sean Hand (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 63 – 89, 63.
55. Levinas, *Existence and Existents*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2001), p. 56.
56. *Ibid.*
57. *Ibid.*
58. Emmanuel Levinas, "Jean Atlan et la tension de l'art," in *Cahier de l'Herne sur Emmanuel Lévinas*, eds. C. Chalier and M. Abensour (Paris: l'Herne, 1993), pp. 509 – 510.
59. Levinas, "The Other in Proust," in *The Levinas Reader*, pp. 160 – 165, 163.
60. *Ibid.*, p. 165.
61. Levinas, "The Servant and Her Master," p. 156. Also see Sean Hand's discussion of Levinas' distinction between poetry and prose in "Shadowing Ethics: Levinas's View of Art and Aesthetics," p. 66.
62. Levinas, "The Servant and Her Master," p. 156.
63. *Ibid.*
64. *Ibid.*, p. 157.
65. Edith Wyschogrod, "The Art in Ethics," in *Ethics as First Philosophy*, ed. Adriaan Peperzak (New York: Routledge, 1995), pp. 137 – 148, 147. See also Robbins, *Altered Reading*.

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66. Jacques Derrida, "Violence and Metaphysics," in *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 312. Sean Hand similarly accuses Levinas of "deploying aesthetic language to free up the concept" and of "being a user of philosophical images." Sean Hand, "Shadowing Ethics: Levinas's View of Art and Aesthetics," in *Facing the Other: The Ethics of Emmanuel Levinas*, ed. Sean Hand (Richmond: Curzon Press, 1996), p. 66. Gary Peters finds Levinas' relationship with aesthetics actually self-undermining, arguing that "the aesthetic origins of some of Levinas' grounding ideas ultimately endangers the ethical purpose which they are later made to serve." Peters, "The Rhythm of Alterity: Levinas and Aesthetics," 82 *Radical Philosophy* (1997), p. 9.
67. Edith Wyschogrod, "Interview with Emmanuel Levinas, December 31, 1982," 4 *Philosophy and Theology* (1989), p. 114.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.* The transcription of the interview cites the text referred to as "La réalité et son nom," but I am unaware of any text by Levinas with this name. Given that Levinas clearly refers to an earlier writing on art – of which he wrote few – it seems probable that the transcription should have read "La réalité et son ombre." I would be most grateful if a reader would correct me if my presumption is unwarranted.
70. *Ibid.*
71. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 131.
72. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 74.
73. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 40.
74. *Ibid.*
75. *Ibid.*
76. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 142.
77. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. C. Lenhardt (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 27.
78. *Ibid.*, p. 33.
79. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 142.
80. See "The Splinter in Your Ear: Noise as the Semblance of Critique," *Culture, Theory & Critique* 46/1 (2005), pp. 43 – 59 and "Why Hardcore Goes Soft: Adorno, Japanese Noise, and the Extirpation of Dissonance," 4/2 *Cultural Logic* (2002).
81. Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Harcourt, 1968), pp. 155 – 200, 190.
82. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 130.
83. See Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," p. 149 ("Words are transfigured or 'frozen,' when language is transformed into documents and vestiges. The living word struggles against this transfer of thought into vestige, it struggles with the letter that appears when there is no-one there to hear. The act of expression makes it impossible to remain within oneself or to keep one's thought for oneself and so reveals the inadequacy of the subject's position in which the ego has a given world at its disposal. To speak is to interrupt my existence as a subject and master, but without offering myself up as master. I am simultaneously a subject and an object. My voice carries the element in which this dialectical situation is realized in concrete terms. The subject who speaks does not situate the world in relation to himself, nor situate himself purely and simply at the heart of his own spectacle, like an artist. Instead he is situated in relation to the *Other* By offering a word, the subject putting himself forward lays himself open and, in a sense, prays.").
84. *Ibid.*, p. 148.
85. *Ibid.*

86. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 130.
87. Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," p. 147.
88. Levinas, "Reality and its Shadow," p. 131; see also p. 142 (describing how criticism "integrates the inhuman work of the artist into the human world.").
89. Albrecht Wellmer, "Truth, Semblance Reconciliation: Adorno's Aesthetic Redemption of Modernity," in *The Frankfurt School: Critical Assessments* 4, ed. J.M Bernstein (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 32.
90. Levinas, "Transcendence and Height," p. 27.
91. *Ibid.*
92. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p. 63.
93. *Ibid.*, p. 60.
94. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 39.
95. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
96. Espen Hammer posed a similar of Hent de Vries *Minimal Theologies*, which evokes the Levinasian notion of "trace." Hammer asks: "What is a trace of the absolute other (of reason)? How does it announce itself, and why should we accept its bid for authority? What makes it genuine or binding?" See Hammer, "God Squaddy," *Radical Philosophy* volume 134 (2005).
97. Levinas, "The Ego and the Totality," in *Collected Philosophical Papers*, p. 41.
98. Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, p. 23.
99. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 162.
100. Levinas, "Apropos of Buber: Some Notes," p. 47.
101. See, for example, Derrida's "At This Very Moment in This Work Here I Am," in *The Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, ed. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), pp. 403 – 439.
102. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p. 64.
103. Levinas, "Enigma and Phenomenon," in Emmanuel Levinas: *Basic Philosophical Writings*, p. 75.
104. Levinas, *Entre Nous: Thinking-of-the-Other*, trans. Michael B. Smith and Barbara Harshav (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 110.
105. *Ibid.*
106. Adriaan Peperzak, "Illeity According to Levinas," *Philosophy Today* 42 (Supp) (1998), pp. 41 – 46, 45.
107. See Simon Jarvis, *Adorno: A Critical Introduction* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 148.
108. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 231.
109. *Ibid.*, p. 263.
110. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 25.
111. *Ibid.*
112. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 405 – 406.
113. *Ibid.*, p. 406.
114. See Jarvis, *Adorno*, pp. 165 – 174. For a contrasting view, see Michael Theunissen's argument that negative dialectics are not entirely dialectical since "a dialectic which transcends itself, as it makes a transition to metaphysics," depends on an undialectical moment. "Negativität bei Adorno," in *Adorno-Konferenz*, eds. J. Habermas and L. von Friedeburg (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983), pp. 41 – 65.
115. See de Vries, *Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas*; Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy*; Raymond Guess

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- and Margarete Kolenbach, eds., *The Early Frankfurt School and Religion* (New York: Palgrave, 2005); and Eduar Mendieta ed., *The Frankfurt School on Religion; Key Writings by the Major Thinkers* (New York: Routledge, 2004).
116. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. xi.
 117. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 247.
 118. Adorno, "Reason and Revelation, in *Critical Models*, p. 139.
 119. Levinas once claimed that "justice can have no other object than economic equality." Levinas, "The Ego and the Totality," p. 44.
 120. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 406.
 121. *Ibid.*, p. 181.
 122. Levinas, "The Transcendence of Words," p. 149.
 123. Adorno, "Theses Against Occultism," in *The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Cultural*, ed. Stephen Crook (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 128 – 134.
 124. Peter Dews, "Adorno, Post-Structuralism, and the Critique of Identity," in *The Frankfurt School: Critical Assessments*, ed. Jay Bernstein (London: Routledge, 1994), Volume IV, pp. 100 – 116, 109.
 125. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," in *Notes to Literature*, trans. Shierry Weber Nicholsen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), Volume I, pp. 37 – 54.
 126. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
 127. *Ibid.*, pp. 39 – 40.
 128. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 129. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
 130. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 1.
 131. *Ibid.*, p. 48.
 132. Rudi Visker, "Is Ethics Fundamental?," *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 – 3, pp. 263 – 302, 263.
 133. *Ibid.*, p. 275.
 134. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, pp. 25 – 26.
 135. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," pp. 39 – 40. On this point, also consider philosopher and fantasy writer R. Scott Bakker's discussion of the relationship between fantasy and modernity: http://www.sffworld.com/authors/b/bakker_scott/articles/whyfantasyandwhynow.html.
 136. Levinas, "Meaning and Sense," p. 63.
 137. *Ibid.*, p. 53.
 138. Adorno, "On Lyric Poetry and Society," p. 44.
 139. Adorno, "Extorted Reconciliation: On Georg Lukács' Realism in Our Time," in *Notes to Literature*, pp. 216 – 240, 225.
 140. *Ibid.*
 141. Adorno, "Subject and Object", in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), pp. 497 – 511, 505.
 142. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 132.
 143. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. xx.
 144. Jarvis, *Adorno*, p. 184.
 145. Bernstein asserts 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." Bernstein, *Adorno*, p. 38. For a contrasting view, see my

- “Making Adorno’s Ethics and Politics Explicit,” *29/3 Social Theory and Practice* (2003).
146. This enigmatic passage from *Transcendence and Height* where Levinas defends the claim that the other should not be understood even as a fellow human being continues: Consequently, it is necessary to avoid the words neighbor or human being, which establish so many things in common with my neighbor (voisin) and so many similarities with my fellow human being; we belong to the same essence. Transcendence is only possible with the Other (Autrui), with respect to whom we are absolutely different, without this difference depending on some quality. Emmanuel Levinas, “Transcendence and Height,” in *Basic Philosophical Writings*, eds. Adriaan Peperzak, Simon Critchley, and Robert Bernasconi, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 27.
 147. For discussions of Levinas’ position on animals, see Peter Atterton, “Face to Face with the Other Animal?,” in *Levinas and Buber: Dialogue and Difference*, eds. Peter Atterton, Matthew Calarco, and Maurice Friedman (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 2004), pp. 262 – 281; Matthew Calarco, “Deconstruction is not Vegetarianism: Humanism, Subjectivity, and Animal Ethics,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 36 (2004), pp. 175 – 201; David Clark, “On Being ‘The Last Kantian in Nazi Germany’: Dealing with Animals after Levinas,” in *Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History*, eds. Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior (New York: Routledge, 1997), pp. 165 – 198; John Llewelyn, “Am I Obsessed by Bobby? (Humanism of the Other Animal),” in *Re-Reading Levinas*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and Simon Critchley (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), pp. 234 – 245.
 148. Levinas, “The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights,” in *Difficult Freedom: Essays on Judaism*, pp.151 – 154.
 149. Llewelyn, “Am I Obsessed by Bobby?,” p. 236.
 150. See Levinas, “The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas,” in *The Provocation of Levinas*, eds. Robert Bernasconi and David Wood (New York: Routledge, 1988), pp. 168 – 180.
 151. *Ibid.*
 152. Levinas, “Meaning and Sense,” p. 63.
 153. Levinas, *Otherwise than Being*, p. 145.
 154. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 364.
 155. Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, p. 220.
 156. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 149.
 157. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 126.
 158. Bernstein, Adorno, p. 36.
 159. *Ibid.*, p. 186.
 160. *Ibid.*, p. 361.
 161. See my “Making Adorno’s Ethics and Politics Explicit.”
 162. Adorno, “Society,” in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, eds. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 1982), p. 271. *Society* 271.
 163. See David Michael Levin, *The Body’s Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism* (New York: Routledge, 1985).
 164. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 26.
 165. *Ibid.*, p. 455. See also Bernstein, *The Fate of Art*, p. 222.
 166. Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, p. 34.