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Social Philosophy after Adorno

This book examines what is living and what is dead in the social philosophy of Theodor W. Adorno, the most important philosopher and social critic in Germany after World War II. When he died in 1969, Adorno's successors abandoned his critical-utopian passions. Habermas, in particular, rejected or ignored Adorno's central insights on the negative effects of capitalism and new technologies upon nature and human life. In this book, Lambert Zuidervaart reclaims Adorno's insights from Habermasian neglect, while taking up legitimate Habermasian criticisms. He also addresses the prospects for radical and democratic transformations of an increasingly globalized world. The book proposes a provocative social philosophy "after Adorno."

Lambert Zuidervaart is Professor of Philosophy at the Institute for Christian Studies and an Associate Member of the Graduate Faculty in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto. A specialist in hermeneutics, social theory, and German philosophy, he is the editor and author of several books, most recently *Artistic Truth: Aesthetics, Discourse, and Imaginative Disclosure*, which was selected by *Choice* as an Outstanding Academic Title for 2005 and received the Symposium Book Award from the Canadian Society for Continental Philosophy in 2006.

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For Joyce, Esther, and Sophie
Sisters across three generations

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Preface

Matthew Klaassen and I were driving back to Toronto from the 2004 Critical Theory Roundtable in Montreal when I asked whether I should turn my recent work on Adorno into a book. Matt had just presented an excellent paper on Habermas's critique of Adorno, the topic of the master's thesis he would complete in 2005. He had attended my graduate seminars on Adorno's *Negative Dialectics* and on Habermas's *Theory of Communicative Action*. He had also been the research assistant for an encyclopedia entry on Adorno as well as for my book on *Artistic Truth*. No one else knew so well the themes of my recent research. So when Matt said yes, that was the signal I needed to begin a book on Adorno's social philosophy.

Substantial components had already been drafted. The earliest materials stem from an invited lecture for the Eslick Symposium at St. Louis University in 1998. In 1999 I revised the lecture into conference papers for the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy and the American Society for Aesthetics and published it as "Autonomy, Negativity, and Illusory Transgression: Menke's Deconstruction of Adorno's Aesthetics," *Philosophy Today*, SPEP Supplement (1999): 154–68. This essay forms the basis for Chapter 1. Materials for Chapter 5 come from papers I presented to the Critical Theory Roundtable in 2001 and to the American Society for Aesthetics in 2002. Significantly reworked, these papers have appeared as "Feminist Politics and the Culture Industry: Adorno's Critique Revisited," in *Feminist Interpretations of Theodor Adorno*,

edited by Renée Heberle (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2006), pp. 257–76. Later I decided the book should include, as an appendix, a version of my online entry “Theodor Adorno,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta (Summer 2003 edition), <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2003/entries/adorno/>. Readers who are not well versed in Adorno’s writings may want to start with the Appendix, for it provides a succinct overview of his work. I wish to thank the editors and publishers for permission to include revised versions of all three essays here.

Between these bookends occur three chapters I have written since taking up a position at the Institute for Christian Studies (ICS), with cross appointments to the Advanced Degree Faculty at the Toronto School of Theology and to the Graduate Faculty in Philosophy at the University of Toronto. Chapter 2 stems from two papers I presented in 2003 to mark the centennial of Adorno’s birth. Together they make up an essay titled “Metaphysics after Auschwitz: Suffering and Hope in Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*,” in *Adorno and the Need in Thinking*, edited by the Adorno Research Group at York University, to be published by the University of Toronto Press in 2007. Chapter 3 incorporates a paper read in Montreal at a 2004 conference on Heidegger and Adorno. The essay version will appear as “Truth and Authentication: Heidegger and Adorno in Reverse,” in the conference volume *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*, edited by Iain Macdonald and Krzysztof Ziarek, to be published by Stanford University Press in 2007. Upon deciding to turn these materials into a book, I also wrote a new chapter on Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. First completed in July 2005 and presented on several occasions in subsequent months, a slightly different version of Chapter 4 will appear in a book on secularity and globalization edited by James K. A. Smith. A footnote on each chapter-opening page provides more details about that chapter’s origins and specific acknowledgments of scholars who commented on earlier drafts. I am especially grateful for sustained discussions with Deborah Cook and Ron Kuipers about the topics of this book.

After publishing *Adorno’s Aesthetic Theory* in 1991, I set much of my Adorno scholarship aside to begin a two-volume project on “Cultural Politics and Artistic Truth.” A strong impetus toward resumed

study came during a three-month visit to Frankfurt in the spring of 2001. There I did new research in the Theodor W. Adorno Archive and participated in Axel Honneth's seminar at the Goethe Universität. I also gave invited lectures at Cambridge University, the University of Edinburgh, the Katholieke Universiteit in Leuven, Belgium, and the Universität Gesamthochschule in Kassel, Germany. I am grateful for gracious hospitality at each of the sponsoring institutions as well as for financial support from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) and from Calvin College, where I taught until 2002.

My writing since then has benefited from simultaneously teaching graduate students at three different schools. The following colleagues deserve special mention for facilitating these interinstitutional arrangements and thereby supporting my own scholarly efforts: Robert Gibbs and James Brown, graduate coordinators and associate chairs in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Toronto; Donald Ainslie, the department chair; and Ansley Tucker, who served as associate academic dean at ICS for two years and became a dear friend. Four students in a guided reading course on "Culture and Economy" read and discussed the entire book manuscript: Benjamin Groenewold, Kristina Jung, Peter Lok, and Tricia Van Dyk. Matt Klaassen, who joined us for the final session, has provided valuable research assistance throughout the project. I want to acknowledge the interest and inspiration of these students and of many others whom I have not named.

Theodor Adorno once recorded a dream in which he refused to abandon his metaphysical hopes because he wanted to awaken together with Gretel, his beloved companion and spouse. Something like Adorno's dream clings to this book on his social philosophy. A year before I decided to write it, our goddaughter Esther Hart and her partner David Roy gave birth to their first and only child. They named her Sophie Marieke. A half year later we learned that at age thirty-six Esther had colorectal cancer. Because the cancer had gone undetected far too long, it had metastasized to several other internal organs. Surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation treatments would follow, temporarily slowing the cancer's growth but not reversing it. Esther wants to live long enough to see her daughter begin school at age four.

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Perhaps I would never have met my wife Joyce Alene Recker if she had not moved to Toronto in the early 1970s to take care of a four-year-old girl and her brother when their mother was in the hospital. That little girl was Esther Hart. Three decades later Joyce provides daily care for Esther's daughter Sophie and supports Esther too. Every day Joyce experiences the joy of new life amid the sadness of a loved one's struggle to stay alive. Writing a book on Adorno pales in significance with such heartfelt labors of affection. My life and work in the past few years have been inspired by Joyce's constant compassion, strengthened by Esther's quiet courage, and enlightened by the playful wisdom of Sophie Marieke, their little girl. With gratitude and admiration I dedicate this book to them, sisters across three generations. Death will not defeat them because love keeps us alive.

Abbreviations

Citations of works listed in both English and German use abbreviations derived from the English title. Reference is given first to the English translation and then to the German original, thus: *ND* 153/156. Frequently translations are emended. Dates immediately after titles indicate when the German originals were first published. The Bibliography contains additional works by Adorno and other authors.

BOOKS BY ADORNO

- AT* *Aesthetic Theory* (1970), trans., ed., and with a translator's introduction by Robert Hullot-Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997)/*Ästhetische Theorie, Gesammelte Schriften* 7, ed. Gretel Adorno and Rolf Tiedemann, 2d ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972)
- CM* *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* (1963, 1969), trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998)/*Gesammelte Schriften* 10.2 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977)
- DE* Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* (1947), ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2002)/*Dialektik der Aufklärung*, in

- Max Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften, Band 5: "Dialektik der Aufklärung" und Schriften 1940–1950*, ed. Gunzelin Schmid Noerr (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1987)
- MM *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (1951), trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: NLB, 1974) / *Minima Moralia: Reflexionen aus dem beschädigten Leben, Gesammelte Schriften* 4, 2d ed. (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996)
- ND *Negative Dialectics* (1966), trans. E. B. Ashton (New York: Seabury Press, 1973) / *Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften* 6 (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973)
- PMP *Problems of Moral Philosophy* (1963), ed. Thomas Schröder, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000) / *Probleme der Moralphilosophie* (1963), ed. Thomas Schröder (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1996)

OTHER AUTHORS

- EG Albrecht Wellmer, *Endgames: The Irreconcilable Nature of Modernity; Essays and Lectures*, trans. David Midgley (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1998) / *Endspiele: Die unversöhnliche Moderne; Essays und Vorträge* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1993)
- PDM Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures*, trans. Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1987) / *Der philosophische Diskurs der Moderne: Zwölf Vorlesungen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1985)
- PP Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983) / *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1971)
- SZ Martin Heidegger, *Sein und Zeit* (1927), 15th ed. (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1979)
- TCA Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, trans. Thomas McCarthy, 2 vols. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984, 1987) / *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981)