Consequences of Enlightenment

What is the relationship between contemporary intellectual culture and the European Enlightenment it claims to reject? In *Consequences of Enlightenment*, Anthony J. Cascardi revisits the arguments advanced in Horkheimer and Adorno’s seminal work *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Cascardi argues against the view that postmodern culture has rejected Enlightenment beliefs and explores instead the continuities contemporary theory shares with Kant’s theory of judgment. The positive consequences of Kant’s failed ambition to bring the project of Enlightenment to completion, he argues, are evident in the aesthetic basis on which subjectivity has survived in the contemporary world. Cascardi explores the link between aesthetics and politics in thinkers as diverse as Habermas, Derrida, Arendt, Nietzsche, Hegel, and Wittgenstein in order to reverse the tendency to see works of art simply in terms of the worldly practices among which they are situated. Works of art, he argues, are themselves capable of disclosing truth. The book explores the post-Enlightenment implications of Kant’s claim that feeling, and not only cognition, may provide a ground for knowledge.

Anthony J. Cascardi is Richard and Rhoda Goldman Distinguished Professor in the Humanities at the University of California, Berkeley, where he teaches in the Departments of Comparative Literature, Rhetoric, and Spanish. He is co-editor of the Literature, Culture, Theory series, and author of *The Subject of Modernity*, among numerous other books and articles.
Literature, Culture, Theory 30

General editors

Anthony J. Cascardi, University of California, Berkeley
Richard Macksey, The Johns Hopkins University

Selected series titles

Return of Freud: Jacques Lacan’s dislocation of psychoanalysis
Samuel Weber
(Translated from the German by Michael Levine)

The subject of modernity
Anthony J. Cascardi

Parody: ancient, modern, and post-modern
Margaret Rose

Possible worlds in literary theory
Ruth Ronen

Critical conditions: postmodernity and the question of foundations
Horace L. Fairlamb

Introduction to literary hermeneutics
Peter Szondi
(Translated from the German by Martha Woodmansee)

Anti-mimesis from Plato to Hitchcock
Tom Cohen

Mikhail Bakhtin: between phenomenology and Marxism
Michael F. Bernard-Donals

Theory of mimesis
Arnold Melberg

The object of literature
Pierre Macherey
(Translated from the French by David Macey)

Rhetoric, sophistry, pragmatism
edited by Steven Mailoux

Derrida and autobiography
Robert Smith

Kenneth Burke: rhetoric, subjectivity, postmodernism
Robert Wess

Rhetoric and culture in Lacan
Gilbert Chaitin

Singularity: extremes of theory in the twentieth century
Thomas Pepper

Paratexts: thresholds of interpretation
Gerard Crenette
Theorizing textual subjects: agency and oppression
MEILI STEELE
Chronoschisms: time, narrative, and postmodernism
URSULA HEISE
Cinema, theory, and political responsibility
PATRICK MCGEE
The practice of theory: rhetoric, knowledge, and pedagogy in the Academy
MICHAEL BERNARD-DONALS
Renegotiating ethics in literature, philosophy and theory
edited by JANE ADAMSON, RICHARD FREADMAN and DAVID PARKER
Consequences of Enlightenment

Anthony J. Cascardi
# Contents

*Acknowledgments*  page viii  

1. The consequences of Enlightenment  1  
2. Aesthetics as critique  49  
3. The difficulty of art  92  
4. Communication and transformation: aesthetics and politics in Habermas and Arendt  132  
5. The role of aesthetics in the radicalization of democracy  175  
6. Infinite reflection and the shape of praxis  213  
7. Feeling and/as force  241  

*Index*  266
Acknowledgments

I am grateful to publishers for permission to include revised versions of material originally published in article form: to the University of Minnesota Press for “Communication and Transformation: Aesthetics and Politics in Habermas and Arendt,” parts of which appeared in Hannah Arendt and the Meaning of Politics, ed. Craig Calhoun and John McGowan (Minneapolis, 1997); and to Duke University Press for “The Difficulty of Art,” an earlier version of which appeared in Thinking Through Art, a special issue of Boundary 2, ed. Alan Singer (Durham, NC, 1998).

To my editor at Cambridge, Ray Ryan, and to my co-editor in the “Literature, Culture, Theory” series, Dick Macksey, go special thanks for their confidence in a project that has been all too long in the making.

The book is dedicated to my family, who have watched it grow along the way: to Elisa, to Matthew, and to Trish.