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978-1-107-03654-3 - Adorno's Practical Philosophy: Living Less Wrongly

Fabian Freyenhagen

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ADORNO'S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY

Adorno notoriously asserted that there is no 'right' life in our current social world. This assertion has contributed to the widespread perception that his philosophy has no practical import or coherent ethics, and he is often accused of being too negative. Fabian Freyenhagen reconstructs and defends Adorno's practical philosophy in response to these charges. He argues that Adorno's deep pessimism about the contemporary social world is coupled with a strong optimism about human potential, and that this optimism explains his negative views about the social world, and his demand that we resist and change it. He shows that Adorno holds a substantive ethics, albeit one that is minimalist and based on a pluralist conception of the bad – a guide for *living less wrongly*. His incisive study does much to advance our understanding of Adorno, and is also an important intervention in current debates in moral philosophy.

FABIAN FREYENHAGEN is Reader in Philosophy at the University of Essex. He is co-editor (with Thom Brooks) of *The Legacy of John Rawls* (2005), and (with Gordon Finlayson) of *Disputing the Political: Habermas and Rawls* (2011). He has published in journals including *Kantian Review*, *Inquiry*, *Telos*, and *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*.

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To those who taught me

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ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Adorno

Apart from references to Adorno's lectures and some of his radio programmes, all references to his works are to the *Gesammelte Schriften* (Adorno 1970–86; henceforth GS), stating the volume number followed by the page number. The first page number is from the German text, the second of the English translation, if there is one. Some references to *Minima Moralia* are to the aphorism number only. In case of the unpublished lectures, the references are to the page mark assigned by the *Adorno-Archiv* (preceded by 'Vo', as customary with references to this source). The following abbreviations are used:

CM	<i>Critical Models</i> , trans. H. W. Pickford. Adorno 1998a.
DE	<i>Dialektik der Aufklärung</i> (with Max Horkheimer) [1944, 1947]. GS, 3. <i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> , trans. J. Cumming. Adorno and Horkheimer 1972.
EA	'Erziehung nach Auschwitz' [1967]. GS, 10.2: 674–90. 'Education after Auschwitz', trans. H. W. Pickford. CM, 191–204.
HF	<i>Zur Lehre von der Geschichte und der Freiheit</i> (1964/5). Posthumously published in 2001. <i>History and Freedom</i> , trans. R. Livingstone, 2006. Adorno 2001.
LCoIS	'Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?' [1968]. GS, 8: 354–70. 'Late Capitalism or Industrial Society?', trans. R. Livingstone. In Adorno 2003a: 111–25.

- MCP *Metaphysik: Begriff und Probleme* (1965).
 Posthumously published in 1998.
Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems, trans. E. Jephcott, 2000. Adorno 1998b.
- MM *Minima Moralia* [1951]. GS, 4.
Minima Moralia, trans. E. Jephcott. Adorno 1978.
- MTP 'Marginalien zu Theorie und Praxis' [written 1969]. Posthumously published in 1977. GS, 10.2: 759–82.
 'Marginalia to Theory and Praxis'. CM, 259–78.
- MWTP 'Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit' [1959]. GS, 10.2: 555–72.
 'The Meaning of Working Through the Past'. CM, 89–103.
- ND *Negative Dialektik* [1966]. GS, 6: 7–412.
Negative Dialectics, trans. E. B. Ashton, 1973. Adorno 1966. [When indicated, the 2001 translation by D. Redmond is used instead.]
- P 'Fortschritt' (1962). GS, 10.2: 617–38.
 'Progress'. CM, 143–60.
- PMP 1956/7 *Probleme der Moralphilosophie* (1956/7). Adorno Archiv Vo1 289–1520.
- PMP 1963 *Probleme der Moralphilosophie* (1963). Posthumously published in 1996.
Problems of Moral Philosophy, trans. R. Livingstone, 2000. Adorno 1996.
- S 'Gesellschaft' [1965]. GS, 8: 9–19.
 'Society'. Adorno 1989: Ch. 22: 267–75
- SO 'Zu Subject und Object' [written 1969].
 Posthumously published in 1977. GS, 10.2: 741–58.
 'On Subject and Object'. CM, 245–58.

Works by Kant

All references to Kant's works are to Kant's *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by the Deutsche (formerly Königlich-Preussische) Akademie der Wissenschaften (Kant 1900–), stating the volume number followed by the page number. The one exception is the *Critique of Pure Reason*; here page numbers refer to the first (with the prefix 'A') and second edition (prefix 'B'). The following abbreviations are used:

ABBREVIATIONS

xv

- G *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten* [1785]. Kant 1900–, 4: 385–463.
Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals, trans. and ed. M. J. Gregor. Kant 1996: 41–108.
- KpV *Kritik der praktischen Vernunft* [1788]. (5: 1–163)
Critique of Practical Reason, trans. and ed. M. J. Gregor. Kant 1996: 137–276.
- MS *Die Metaphysik der Sitten* [1797]. Kant 1900–, 6: 203–493.
The Metaphysics of Morals, trans. and ed. M. J. Gregor. Kant 1996: 363–603.
- R *Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der inneren Vernunft*. [1792–3, 1794]. Kant 1900–, 6: 1–202.
Religion within the Boundary of Mere Reason and Other Essays, trans. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni. Kant 1998: 31–191.

Other works

- NE Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* [c.350 BCE]. Barnes 1984, Vol. 2.