

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00009-4 - The Sociology of Theodor Adorno
Matthias Benzer
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Sociology of Theodor Adorno

Theodor Adorno is a widely studied figure, but most often with regard to his work on cultural theory, philosophy and aesthetics. *The Sociology of Theodor Adorno* provides the first thorough English-language account of Adorno's sociological thinking. Matthias Benzer reads Adorno's sociology through six major themes: the problem of conceptualising capitalist society; empirical research; theoretical analysis; social critique; the sociological text; and the question of the non-social. Benzer explains the methodological and theoretical ideas informing Adorno's reflections on sociology and illustrates Adorno's approach to examining social life, including astrology, sexual taboos and racial prejudice. Benzer clarifies Adorno's sociology in relation to his work in other disciplines and the inspiration his sociology took from social thinkers such as Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Kracauer and Benjamin. The book raises critical questions about the viability of Adorno's sociological mode of procedure and its potential contributions and challenges to current debates in social science.

MATTHIAS BENZER is Peacock Fellow at the Centre for Analysis of Risk and Regulation at the London School of Economics and Political Science.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00009-4 - The Sociology of Theodor Adorno
Matthias Benzer
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

The Sociology of Theodor Adorno

Matthias Benzer



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00009-4 - The Sociology of Theodor Adorno
Matthias Benzer
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Tokyo, Mexico City
Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press,
New York

www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781107000094

© Matthias Benzer 2011

This publication is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without the written
permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2011

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data
Benzer, Matthias, 1980–
The sociology of Theodor Adorno / Matthias Benzer.
p. cm.
ISBN 978-1-107-00009-4 (hardback)
1. Adorno, Theodor W., 1903–1969. 2. Sociology. I. Title.
HM585.B467 2011
301.092–dc22

2010044891

ISBN 978-1-107-00009-4 Hardback

Cambridge University Press has no responsibility for the persistence or
accuracy of URLs for external or third-party internet websites referred to
in this publication, and does not guarantee that any content on such
websites is, or will remain, accurate or appropriate.

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00009-4 - The Sociology of Theodor Adorno
Matthias Benzer
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

Dedicated to Nigel Dodd

Cambridge University Press
978-1-107-00009-4 - The Sociology of Theodor Adorno
Matthias Benzer
Frontmatter
[More information](#)

*There is an immense force in saying No,
and sometimes it seems to me that it is so great
that one could live on it alone.*

Elias Canetti

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	page viii
<i>Abbreviations for frequently cited texts</i>	ix
Introduction	1
1 Nothing under the sun	15
Society as a sociological problem	15
Essence and epiphenomena	39
2 Sociological material	51
Saturated sociology	51
In search of material	60
Empirical research in Adorno's late sociology	74
3 Sociological reflection	86
Theoretical analysis in sociology	86
Theory in sociological research	100
4 The socio-critical dimension	125
Socio-critical sociology	125
Praxis in the time of theory	145
5 The sociological text	162
Constellation in sociology	162
Constellation and mimesis	170
Illustration	181
6 Sociology and the non-social	197
Colours, grey	198
Miniatures	216
Conclusion	231
<i>Appendix: Adorno's sociology in chronological perspective</i>	243
<i>References</i>	248
<i>Index</i>	262

Acknowledgements

This book is based on doctoral research conducted over several years under the supervision of Dr Nigel Dodd at the London School of Economics. It has benefited from an ongoing dialogue with Gwyneth Hawkins, critical comments by two anonymous referees and Juljan Krause's advice. My doctoral examiners, Professor David Frisby, who has sadly passed away, and Dr Graeme Gilloch, provided generous guidance for developing this publication. My undergraduate students on SOCY30011: Tiller Girls and Terrorists, at the University of Manchester helped me understand how Adorno's sociology might be discussed with an interested audience. James Thomas provided invaluable editorial support. I am grateful to Professor Bridget Hutter at the LSE and Professor Nick Crossley at the University of Manchester for granting me the time to finish the manuscript. For their company over the years, I thank Mark Ready, whose presence will not be forgotten, Steve Van Riel, Ming-Whey Lee, Al Glascott, Christopher Knapp and Klaus Frick. *Ein herzliches Dankeschön* to my parents Marianne and Werner Benzer and to my sister Judith for their support. My gratitude to Jenni Benzer is beyond words. All mistakes are mine.

Some of my thoughts, materials and formulations on the social dimension of concepts and on social critique in Chapters 3 and 4 have been published in the paper 'Social Critique in the Totally Socialised Society', *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 37/5 by Sage Publications Ltd, All rights reserved. © SAGE Publications Ltd, 2011. It is available at: online.sagepub.com/

Abbreviations for frequently cited texts

AE	<i>Against Epistemology</i> (Adorno 1982)
AP	<i>The Authoritarian Personality</i> (Adorno et al. 1950)
A&B	<i>The Complete Correspondence 1928–1940</i> (Adorno and Benjamin 1994)
A&H1, A&H2, A&H4	Vols. I, II and IV of <i>Briefwechsel 1927–1969</i> (Adorno and Horkheimer 2003, 2004, 2006)
A&K	<i>„Der Riß der Welt geht auch durch mich ...“</i> (Adorno and Kracauer 2008)
CLA	<i>Can One Live after Auschwitz?</i> (Adorno 2003a)
CM	<i>Critical Models</i> (Adorno 1998b)
CoM	<i>Current of Music</i> (Adorno 2009a)
DE	<i>Dialectic of Enlightenment</i> (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002)
GEX	<i>Gruppenexperiment</i> (Adorno and Dirks 1955)
GS1, GS2 etc.	Vols. 1, 2 etc. of <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> (Adorno 2003b)
HF	<i>History and Freedom</i> (Adorno 2006a)
HTS	<i>Hegel</i> (Adorno 1993b)
INH	‘The Idea of Natural-History’ (Adorno 2006b)
IS	<i>Introduction to Sociology</i> (Adorno 2000a)
ISW	‘Ist Soziologie eine Wissenschaft vom Menschen?’ (Adorno and Gehlen [1965] 1974)
JA	<i>The Jargon of Authenticity</i> (Adorno 1973a)
MCP	<i>Metaphysics</i> (Adorno 2000b)
MM	<i>Minima Moralia</i> (Adorno 1978)
ND	<i>Negative Dialectics</i> (Adorno 2001; since this is an unpaginated online translation of Adorno 1996, page numbers refer to the latter German version)

x Abbreviations for frequently cited texts

NLI, NLII	Vols. I and II of <i>Notes to Literature</i> (Adorno 1991b, 1992b)
OL	<i>Ohne Leitbild</i> , in <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> , vol. 10.1 (Adorno 2003b)
P	<i>Prisms</i> (Adorno 1983)
PD	<i>The Positivist Dispute in German Sociology</i> (Adorno <i>et al.</i> 1976)
PETG	<i>Philosophische Elemente einer Theorie der Gesellschaft</i> (Adorno 2008)
PTI, PTII	Vols. I and II of <i>Philosophische Terminologie</i> (Adorno 1973b, 1974)
S	‘Society’ (Adorno 1969a)
SDE	<i>The Stars Down to Earth and Other Essays on the Irrational in Culture</i> (Adorno 2002b)
SoI	<i>Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?</i> (Adorno 1969b)
SP1, SP2	‘Sociology and Psychology’ and ‘Sociology and Psychology II’ (Adorno 1967, 1968)
SSI	Vol. I of <i>Soziologische Schriften</i> , in <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> , vol. 8 (Adorno 2003b)
VSI, VSII	Vols. I and II of <i>Vermischte Schriften</i> , in <i>Gesammelte Schriften</i> , vols. 20.1 and 20.2 (Adorno 2003b)

Translations of German sources are mine. English translations have been modified as appropriate.