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.

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ADORNO’S PRACTICAL PHILOSOPHY
Living Less Wrongly

FABIAN FREYENHAGEN
University of Essex
To those who taught me
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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 In case of the unpublished lectures, the references are to the page mark assigned by the *Adorno-Archiv* (preceded by ‘Vo’, as customary with references to this source).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:


**DE** *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (with Max Horkheimer) [1944, 1947]. GS, 3.


**LCoIS** ‘Spätkapitalismus oder Industriegesellschaft?’ [1968]. GS, 8: 354–70.

MCP


MM


MTP

‘Marginalia to Theory and Praxis’. CM, 259–78.

MWTP


ND


P


PMP 1956/7


PMP 1963


S


SO

‘Zu Subject und Object’ [written 1969]. 
‘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


Other works