**Critiques of Theology:**

**[---subtitle?----]**

Yotam Hotam

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**Introduction: A Handmaid’s Tale**

1. Between critique and theology

It is hard to imagine a concept more significant to modern Western thought than that of “critique.” Thus, Foucault, for example, argued that

…a certain manner of thinking, of speaking, likewise of acting, and a certain relation to what exists, to what one knows, to what one does, as well as a relation to society, to culture, to others, and all this one might name ‘the critical attitude.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Particularly in the wake of the Enlightenment, a “critical attitude” came to denote content analysis, the scope and validity of concepts, theories, fields of knowledge, or mental states; a method for investigating social constructs, heteronomous forces, and historical processes; the constitution of our relation to ourselves and others; and a central facet in the development of ethics. Yet when he articulates the nature of modernity, Foucault, to name just one example, also likens it to a manifestation of secularism. At the heart of the relationship between critique and a secular worldview is the notion that the bedrock of a “critical attitude” is reason, its primary objective being to break free from faith- or revelation-based deduction. In practice, then, critique was the torchbearer of secular ideology. It was perceived – to quote Talal Assad’s compelling depiction – as “the essence of secular heroism.”[[2]](#footnote-2)

This book is dedicated to this “essence” of modernity and secularism as manifested in German-Jewish twentieth century thought. At its core, the book argues that, at least with regard to this particular body of thought, there are in fact intricate links between critique and religious-theological traditions: rather than highlighting the contrast or disconnect between “secular heroism” and religion and religiosity, it wishes to trace the connection between them. For this end, the book focuses on the relation between critique and religious and theological thought as manifested in selected writings of four influential German-Jewish thinkers: Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Theodor Adorno (1903-1969), and Hannah Arendt (1906-1975). In lieu of treating critique as a testament to the disengagement from religion and religiosity, this book seeks to identify how the work of these prominent thinkers, differing in so many ways from one another, gives expression to the complex relationship between critique and its religious-theological origins.

The book’s central argument, then, is rather straightforward: a common denominator is to be found in the work of these intellectuals pertaining to the dialogue between critique and religious-theological legacies – even if it surfaces in different forms, within different intellectual disciplines and different social-political contexts of the first and latter halves of the twentieth century. On the one hand, these thinkers indeed saw critique as epitomizing the “essence of secular heroism,” which features in their work in two main ways: the first as an analysis of concepts and fields of inquiry, the second as a means to interpret and thus examine social, historical, and political questions so as to offer “critical narratives of modernity of lasting significance that addressed generally human as well as specifically Jewish concerns.”[[3]](#footnote-3) On the other hand, critique operates in the work of these thinkers with a theological consciousness, often finding its expression within a predominantly religious frame of reference. Critique, religion, and theology are in this sense interwoven and inextricable from one another. My purpose in this book is then to examine the different ways in which these three categories intersect – particularly how their interplay shaped the manner in which the examined thinkers formulated their social, political, or historical critiques as part of a modern existence, while taking into account their Jewish identity. It is important to note, however, that my intention is not to dispute the fact that these were modern, decidedly secular thinkers. Not one of them was in any way religious, nor even sympathetic to religious ways of life. And yet it is nevertheless possible to identify links between critique and religious or theological ideas in selected writings by Freud, Benjamin, Adorno and Arendt. It is the objective of this book to delineate the intricate workings of this exchange. Each of the four chapters of this book is therefore dedicated to one thinker. Focusing either on one particular text or on a selection of works, each chapter offers an analysis of how the thinker in question forged manifold interrelations between critique and religious-theological approaches.

How each thinker approaches such a dialogue individually will be discussed in detail further on. Here, I would first like to clarify that the meeting points between critique and theology in these thinkers’ works can be united under the overarching concept of a critique of theology.[[4]](#footnote-4) My intention in using this term is twofold. On the one hand, to introduce the critical positions of these thinkers toward religion and theology. On the other, to demonstrate how their critical stance concurrently emerges out of religious-theological traditions and can in many ways be traced back to them. The second aspect, therefore, constitutes the central emphasis of this book, whose objective it is, as mentioned, to trace the multifarious relationship between the critiques formulated by the examined thinkers and their rootedness in religion and theology. It is worthwhile to distinguish between the concepts of a critique of theology and “critical theology.” The scholarly denotation of critical theology, albeit not very widespread, usually indicates the manifestations of critique in theological thinking.[[5]](#footnote-5) My purpose, however, in highlighting connections between religion, theology, and critique is in many ways diametrically opposite. I wish to bring to light how religious and theological concepts are manifested in critical thinking. The notion of a critique of theology, therefore, reverses the relationship between the two components. By this I do not mean formal religious thinking that makes use of logic-based argumentation strategies to validate God’s existence or to articulate principles of faith. Rather, the emphasis is on a modern critique (that is, a form of analysis, the examination of social or political mechanisms) that draws on the theological canon, and the complex interrelations formed as a result. A critique of theology is also, therefore, distinct from political theology, for its focus is not on the construction of modern political concepts, but on what emerges from the interaction between the concepts of critique and theology, which may extend, but is not limited to, political thought.

In employing critique of theology as an overarching concept, my aim is, therefore, to bring attention to how critical thinking demonstrated by the thinkers in question – which saw itself as adhering to the principles of the Enlightenment and found expression in diverging disciplines – was no stranger to religious and theological concepts, but rather related to them with a profound sensibility.[[6]](#footnote-6) Put differently, the critique of these thinkers always takes the religious realm of thought into account, even if it does so implicitly, as is usually the case. Kafka’s assertion that theology “was the main resource for our conceptual commitments” is largely applicable to the examined thinkers’ employment of critique.[[7]](#footnote-7) Within this conceptual framework, I do not just ask what critique denotes to each of the thinkers in question, but also: what religious or theological tradition informs each thinker’s thought and what are the ways in which critique, religion, and theology intertwine.

These questions are intimately linked to the legacy of the Enlightenment, and specifically to that of Immanuel Kant. In describing critique as “the essence of secular heroism,” the afore-mentioned Talal Assad pursues Foucault’s line of reasoning, which lays emphasis on the significance of the Enlightenment, and of Kant in particular, to the formulation of a “critical attitude” distinct from theology and characteristic of a modern-secular worldview.[[8]](#footnote-8) For Kant especially, the objective of the former (critique) is to “purify” concepts of fallacies (and in the process to set critique’s boundaries and scope), while the latter (theology) deals with principles of faith. In the strict Kantian sense, critique means then a form of analysis of a certain content or an object of study that includes charting its sources (*Quellen*), extent (*Umfang*), and boundaries (*Grenzen*).[[9]](#footnote-9) In taking the faculty of reason as its object of study, for example, critique aims – and for the self-flattering Kant fairly succeeds – to “remove all errors” (*Abstellung aller Irrungen*) associated with this faculty and in doing so from “principles” (Prinzipien) that are “independent of all experience” *(unabhängig von aller Erfahrung*).[[10]](#footnote-10) For Kant, this approach to critique also means a form of purification (reinigen) of “a ground that was completely overgrown.”[[11]](#footnote-11)

Kant, then, analyzed the concept of critique in its pure form. Nevertheless, the relation between critique and theology was no less significant in his thought, paving the way for his successors to further consider its nature. Seemingly, the relationship is dichotomous. True to this approach, Heinrich Heine wrote in the epilogue to his last collection of poems that “one has to choose between religion and philosophy, between the dogma of the revelation of faith and the ultimate conclusion of systematic thought, between the biblical God and atheism.”[[12]](#footnote-12) A hundred or so years later, Leo Strauss argued that the main choice faced by mankind, which leaves no middle ground, is between “human guidance or divine guidance.” That is, “whether men can acquire knowledge of the good, without which they cannot guide their lives individually and collectively, by the unaided efforts of their reason, or whether they are dependent for that knowledge on divine revelation.”[[13]](#footnote-13)

Yet such a binary construction (he who suffered on his sickbed ended up doubting it) remains in some of Kant’s original writings somewhat ambiguous. It seems to be undisputed that Kant himself left room for religion in the sphere of morality. Within this sphere, the concept of God – which was intrinsic and vital to Kant’s critical endeavors – and of an eternal soul (immortality) are postulated, along with free will, solely as conditions for the possibility of human morality.[[14]](#footnote-14) We nevertheless need theology, says Kant, “for religion, i.e., for the practical-specifically, the moral-use of reason.”[[15]](#footnote-15) Such is also the case when Kant discusses progress in the sphere of metaphysics. Here, Kant posits that after the first, theoretical-dogmatic stage and the second, skeptical stage, comes a third, theological stage with all the cognitions *a priori* that lead to it and make it necessary.[[16]](#footnote-16) The notion of philosophical theology is therefore applicable to Kant, “Provided that it stays within the bounds of bare reason.”[[17]](#footnote-17)

Yet in *The Contest of Faculties* Kant appears to go further still. While he articulates a clear structural distinction between the “lower” philosophical faculty (responsible for critical thinking and the pursuit of truth) and the “upper” theological faculty (which Kant relates primarily to biblical theology), he nevertheless leaves room for interaction between the two, which “old Kant,” as Hans Jonas called him, explicitly contemplates:

We can also grant the theology faculty’s proud claim that the philosophy faculty is its handmaid (*Magd*) though the question remains, whether the servant is the mistress’s *torchbearer (Fackel vorträger)* or *trainbearer (Schleppe nachträger),* provided it is not driven away or silenced.[[18]](#footnote-18)

The handmaid’s tale is therefore the story of philosophical critique in its relation to theology. In this sense, Kant reformulates the ideas of Thomas Aquinas, who stressed theology’s superiority. Naturally, Kant’s intention was not to subjugate philosophy to theology, on the contrary, he attempted to challenge this hierarchy. But Kant’s marvelous, even promethean metaphor is nevertheless left open to interpretation. In any case, the question posed by Kant pertains not to the existence as such of a relation between critique and theology (which he does not deny), but to its nature. It follows that critique’s handmaid’s tale is a rather more winding narrative than that of its utter separation from theology. For Kant, the handmaid’s tale remains open, and the philosophical handmaid’s status with respect to her ladyship, theology, warrants, at the very least, further consideration.

If we take a step back and consider the philosophy of the Enlightenment as a whole, it would appear that the complex interplay between critical thinking and religion – between the maid and the lady – is not unique to Kant. As observed by historian David Sorkin, “Contrary to the secular master narrative the Enlightenment was not only compatible with religious belief but conducive to it.”[[19]](#footnote-19) For Sorkin, the philosophy of the Enlightenment did not reject religious thought but accommodated it, precisely due to its subject matter. Indeed, this line of reasoning serves as the foundation for this book’s endeavor. The examined thinkers’ concept of critique (which, as explained earlier, draws on the tradition of the Enlightenment and pertains to both the analysis of concepts and fields of inquiry, and to social, historical, and political issues) does not in any feasible way reflect a religious worldview. But it demonstrates a sensitivity, not only to the synergy between critique and theology, but to the importance of preserving, even rescuing this exchange. Such sensitivity does not constitute a form of defiance against the legacy of the Enlightenment, but its continuation. For, as in the case of Heinrich Heine, it is in this legacy’s nature to allow for (sometimes radical) self-criticism.

1. “Cognitive insiders”

The selection of these four highly renowned and influential thinkers as an example for the relationship between critique and theology in modern German-Jewish thought is not arbitrary – even if it, perhaps inevitably, involves a certain amount of personal preference. As “cognitive insiders” of the modern Western culture in which they lived (as elucidated by Paul Mendes-Flohr), these thinkers were among the most prominent of their time.[[20]](#footnote-20) Their intellectual impact is still felt today, well “beyond the borders” of German language and culture that formed their habitat and frame of reference.[[21]](#footnote-21) The differences between them, however, are just as apparent, with their work extending across generations and academic disciplines. Freud belongs to a different generation to that of Benjamin, Adorno, and Arendt – the latter three were even acquainted – a disparity that may present some methodological difficulties. In a way, the same can be said of Benjamin, who was somewhat older than the latter two, both of whom saw him as a source of inspiration. Psychoanalysis (Freud), critical thinking (Benjamin and, in dissimilar fashion, Adorno), and political theory (Arendt) represent decidedly different disciplinary frameworks, which in turn lend different meanings to the concept of critique. Conversely, one must not look far to find references in Adorno and Arendt’s works to the writings of Freud and Benjamin – both of whom took their own lives in the space of almost exactly one year, in the throes or in the face of forced exile, and within the same historical context – if for vastly different personal reasons.

In selecting these four thinkers it is not my intention to disregard the differences between them, nor to illuminate a cross-generational collaboration, nor other personal or conceptual ties between them (even if these will be duly noted throughout the book). Certainly, my objective is not to demonstrate a disciplinary, or even generic affinity to religion. I wish to make two, somewhat different arguments. First, I suggest that precisely because of the generational, historical, and disciplinary divergence between these thinkers, examining them alongside one another highlights the significance of the shared theological elements in their concept of critique. Second, I seek to challenge conventional wisdom concerning each of these thinkers’ relation to religious traditions and to the theological imagination. Contrary to the “immediate suspects,” as we may call them, whose work prominently features religion and theology (such as Franz Rosenzweig, Martin Buber, Gershom Scholem, Hans Jonas, and others), there appears to be a vibrant debate surrounding the examined thinkers’ relationship to everything theological.

Freud’s animosity toward religion, which he regarded as a delusion, is well-known. Equally famous is his self-perception as a “non-believing Jew” (ungläubiger Jude), which received considerable scholarly attention (particularly the element of denial in the seemingly unnecessary addition of “Jew” – not least thanks to Peter Gay’s biography). Attempts of scholars such as Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi and Eric Santner (to whose study I will refer later on) to offer an alternative view have not penetrated the consensus, mostly because Freud was remarkably consistent in his stance toward religion and in his psychoanalytical reading of it as an expression of neuroses.[[22]](#footnote-22) Similarly, Hannah Arendt is regarded by many as the “most secular” thinker of her generation. Peter Gordon, for example, underscores the tension between Arendt’s “nonmetaphysical account of the public world” and the common view of her contemporaries, to whom the “political theological predicament” was paramount.[[23]](#footnote-23) In the same vein, Micha Brunlik distinguishes between modern Jewish thought, which undertook to secularize theological concepts, and Arendt’s political (by which he means strictly secular) analysis of the “Jewish fate” (das jüdische Schicksal).[[24]](#footnote-24) These are but two examples of what may be regarded as the prevalent scholarly view.

With regard to “critical theory” thinkers (a group that comfortably fits Benjamin and prominently features Adorno), existing research is marked by discord. I am inclined to agree with the assertion that critical theory has largely been perceived in the literature as a “progressive-enlightenment-secular project,” in recent decades even as an “antidote” of sorts to the dangers of “political theology.”[[25]](#footnote-25) It is nevertheless becoming increasingly apparent that this position is being contested, with several scholars seeking to redirect attention to the theological elements in critical theory. Discussions on how best to interpret, for example, Benjamin’s works, reflect profound disagreement regarding the significance he attributes to concepts such as messianism, salvation, divinity, or mysticism. A trace of the initial dispute between Adorno and Gershom Scholem – “the one a Marxist, the other a Zionist,” to quote Arendt’s sharp-tongued description[[26]](#footnote-26) – seems to resonate in every discussion on how to interpret Benjamin since.[[27]](#footnote-27) On one side of the arena is Adorno’s dismissal of any extra-philosophical reading of Benjamin as a “sort of cliché” (pertinent to readings of Adorno himself), on the other is Scholem’s emphasis on Benjamin’s messianic elements and rootedness in Jewish canon, which many regard as a figment of Scholem’s own imagination.[[28]](#footnote-28) I venture to posit that even today, most scholars generally fall on either side of this divide. Nevertheless, the original dispute between Adorno and Scholem sheds light on the complexity this book wishes to address. For as disclosed in the written correspondence between them, both agreed that “the ‘transformation’ of Benjamin from his early theological speculation to his later ‘Materialisms’ does not denote the ‘disappearance’ (*Verschwindung*) of the theological categories but rather their concealment (*Verschweigen*).”[[29]](#footnote-29) I further argue that this reading of Benjamin should also color interpretations of Adorno, who was himself in search of “religion’s critical promise.”[[30]](#footnote-30) Thus, this book seeks to complement existing research on the relation between critique and theology in Adorno’s critical theory and in Benjamin’s writings by looking to works by Arendt and Freud – which have not, to date, been approached from this angle, certainly not together. By and large, what may be termed the “cunning of theology” features in the thought of all four thinkers, each demonstrating it in his or her own particular way.

Within this broader context, none of these thinkers ever denied their Jewish heritage. I do, however, abide by Paul North’s observation that since “‘Judaism’ in Central Europe had become hard to parse, and many Jews who held on to the category often had, in point of fact, little or no experience with Judaism, their interpretations of it were precisely not grounded in the tradition.”[[31]](#footnote-31) This easily pertains to thinkers such as Benjamin, Arendt, and Adorno, but also applies, if not to the same extent, to Freud. It could reasonably be argued that in more ways than one, Judaism, or Jewishness (a term which Arendt favored in particular) “was an open category” that none of them denied, but which they were not necessarily able or willing to imbue with substance.[[32]](#footnote-32) Judith Butler’s inquiry as to “what is finally Jewish about Arendt’s thought” also pertains, to varying degrees, to the other three.[[33]](#footnote-33)

An “open category,” however, does not necessarily denote meaninglessness. It seems to me that this distinction is one way of understanding Mendes-Flohr’s insight that alongside being cognitive insiders, these thinkers were simultaneously, due to their Jewish origin, “axionormative outsiders.” That is, foreign in their own homeland, and at any rate cautious in their approach to the ideals of its culture.[[34]](#footnote-34) Notoriously difficult as it may be to chart the precise trajectories along which their Jewish identity, whether foreign or merely cautious, found its expression under “open” conditions – it is hardly feasible to argue that “open categories” as such are bound to vanish. On the contrary, an open category can manifest itself in a rich array of perspectives and interpretations (as opposed to, perhaps, tangible subject matters), and these can indeed be traced, albeit with due caution.

When an aging Freud sought to succinctly capture the nature of the exile forced upon him and members of his Viennese circle in 1938, he conjured the image of “Yavneh and its sages,” likening himself to Yohanan Ben Zakkai and them to his disciples. While anecdotal, this nevertheless says something of the workings of Freud’s political imagination. Young Walter Benjamin’s famous pronouncement that language is a “name” (*Sprache ist Namen*) consciously alludes to Hebrew scripture, which refers to God as *Hashem*, “the name.” Similarly, Adorno exhibited, to a certain degree, what Eliot Wolfson termed “a Jewish passion for the impossible”[[35]](#footnote-35) – especially, as I will attempt to demonstrate in the designated chapter, in his negative theology. A further example can be found in the argument, made by a host of scholars, that “Arendt’s appeal to the covenantal tradition connects between the Jewish and Roman sources of her thought.”[[36]](#footnote-36) This does not mean that untangling the web woven by Arendt between Rome in Jerusalem is by any means an easy task. Indeed, this topic has its own history in German-Jewish writing. But such a web nevertheless existed. To push this idea further, one could argue that this body of thought offers, perhaps, a modern Jewish interpretive tradition concerning both Jewish and Christian theological perspectives, allowing them at times to bleed into each other. This new form of interpretation certainly manifested what came to be called in the literature “Judeo-Christian” intellectual legacies, of which these thinkers were an integral part. For our intents and purposes, the heart of the matter is the intersection between theology and critique exhibited in each individual case. One may posit in this respect that a critique of theology enabled these thinkers to “envision a place for Jews in the polity” – albeit with due regard to whether they believed in the practical possibility of such a place at all.[[37]](#footnote-37)

1. Sites of Critique and Theology

Here I wish to recourse back to how each of the examined thinkers exhibits relations between the concept of critique and religious and theological ideas. It is important to note that not only the focus on specific German-Jewish circles, but also the selection of texts for analysis presents a certain challenge. First, common to all the discussed texts are their relatively scarce mentions in existing scholarship, with the additional implication that none of them have, to date, been read alongside one another. Second, I wish to frame the texts and the issues discussed in them as “sites” where a complex interplay between critique and theology takes place. In this respect, sites of interaction between critique and theology will exemplify different versions of a critique of theology. What I suggest, then, is a methodological preference for what Michel de Certeau described as “bring[ing] into view the *present* site in which an investigation takes form.”[[38]](#footnote-38)

In this manner, de Certeau wishes to approach the “scriptural operation” of writing modern history, which he saw as a fictional narrative. De Certeau’s criticism of the fictionality of historical narratives and the important role he attributes to it in the investigative process fall beyond the scope of this book. However, his perspective allows to “bring into view” modern sites of writing beyond those pertaining directly to historical writing. Unlike de Certeau, therefore, my aim is not to examine a German-Jewish “function of writing” in order to illuminate its fictionality, but to trace the different modes of relation between critique and theology it produces.

Naturally, the selected texts (which will be listed shortly) do not encompass these thinkers’ entire intellectual range. All four dealt with a wide array of issues, and the richness of their writing, its complexity and depth, cannot be represented in full through any given text or thematic prism. A reading of selected texts, no matter how close, which disregards the broader intellectual context, is in this sense vulnerable to criticism. However, I do not set out to provide an all-encompassing interpretation of each of these thinkers and their work. My purpose is to examine specific textual sites, and within these sites, clearly defined themes, which expose the complex relationships between their concept of critique and relevant theological elements manifested by each of the examined thinkers.

Freud’s 1905 book *Jokes and their Relation to the Unconscious* (*Der Witz und seine Beziehung zum Unbewußten*) will serve to demonstrate the relation between critique and theology in his thought. What makes this book interesting is precisely its relatively marginal status with respect to understanding psychoanalytical theory, or Freud’s meta-psychological perspectives. Compared to the vast scholarship on Freud’s ideas about dreams, sexuality, civilizational discontent, totemism, or Moses and the birth of monotheism, research on Freud’s musings on jokes, written in parallel to and sometimes simultaneously with his theories on sexuality, is relatively marginal.[[39]](#footnote-39)

In the chapter dedicated to Freud, I will try to demonstrate how his book on jokes constitutes an important intellectual site for understanding the connection between Freud’s critique of law (which he formulates in psychoanalytical terms) and religious intellectual traditions. I will characterize this connection as a form of critique of theology, as Freud’s critique of law secularizes theological concepts and relations.

By employing the concept of critique of law I wish to point out how jokes, as understood by Freud, defy norms and social customs, thus leveling criticism against them. Critique indicates both the analysis of social constructs and resistance to or liberation from these same constructs – manifested, according to Freud, in jokes. The concept of “law” is thus meant here as something broader than its merely legal connotation, encapsulating the full range of norms and rules governing our lives. As described by Robert Cover, the concept of law extends beyond a system of rules to be observed, but denotes more broadly “a world in which we live.”[[40]](#footnote-40) According to Freud, jokes serve as a form of critique, defiance against the imposition of social orders within different social, ethical, and behavioral contexts – “the world in which we live.” The objective of such critique, however, is the preservation of those same social orders which jokes target. I therefore argue that in jokes, the law in fact turns against itself in order to preserve itself.

With respect to this last point I wish to demonstrate how Freud secularizes theological concepts. Here I should clarify that my approach to theology in this context largely pursues the line of reasoning employed in Eric Santner’s extraordinary work, mentioned earlier in brief. Santner posits that Freud’s mostly negative assessments of religion “are in some way undermined or at least challenged by what I can’t help but characterize as the ‘spiritual’ dimension of the new science he founded.” As argued by Santner, this implies that Freud’s psychology (which he therefore views as close to Rosenzweig’s philosophy) should be understood as a “psychotheology of everyday life” according to which “with the ‘death of God’ the entire problematic of transcendence actually exerts its force in a far more powerful way in the very fabric of everyday life” – which means that Freud (like Rosenzweig) presents a form of “immanent transcendence.”[[41]](#footnote-41) This implies, argues Santner, the development of a “new awareness of the theological dimensions of Freudian thought.”[[42]](#footnote-42)

Following this train of thought, I wish to call attention to how the critique of law exhibited in jokes is in fact derived from Freud’s interest in divine law, which he plainly expresses in numerous personal and intellectual contexts. More importantly, however, Freud regards the joking mechanism as a “shortcut.” He does so, as I will try to demonstrate, in various ways pertaining to the content, structure, and objective of jokes. The idea of a “shortcut” is not arbitrary. It corresponds to a Jewish tradition of thought that links between shortcuts, or *Kapandaria*, and infringement. But this halachic idea in Jewish tradition, according to which a shortcut amounts to a breach of divine law, is secularized by Freud. He formulates it as an infringement meant to protect civilization and the existing social order, an endeavor born of that same order. In this manner, Freud’s idea of shortcuts exemplifies a critique derived from theology, or, in other words, a mechanism of social critique rooted in theological reasoning. I do not argue, then, that Freud was thoroughly familiar with Jewish biblical tradition – although he certainly was aware of it. But Freud does imbue with new, modern meaning a fundamental dilemma featured in Jewish thought and pertaining to the question of living by the creed of “the whole earth is full of his glory.” This in turn sheds light on the “shortcut” encapsulated within the content and critical dimension Freud attributes to jokes.

Walter Benjamin’s theory of youth constitutes another site for charting the relationship between critique and theological thought in the beginning of the twentieth century. Here, in contrast to Freud, I will not focus on one main text but on a selection of philosophical writings, essays, and notes written between 1910-1917. These include the articles “Socrates,” “The Metaphysics of Youth,” On Language as Such and on the Language of Man,” “The Life of Students” – some of which were published in contemporary periodicals and student journals – as well as “Dostoyevsky’s The Idiot” from 1917, which may be regarded as Benjamin’s last article dealing explicitly with youth. This selection, therefore, reflects the evolution of Benjamin’s theory of youth, which he developed before and during the First World War.

Youth as formulated in Benjamin’s thought has not attracted much scholarly attention. This is somewhat surprising, considering the subject’s prominence in the beginning of his career, but may be attributed to the fact that Benjamin’s early writings are generally regarded as having limited significance for understanding his later work.[[43]](#footnote-43) Steizinger’s studies from recent years are an excellent example.[[44]](#footnote-44) On the one hand, these studies are among a few offering an in-depth examination of Benjamin’s theory of youth. On the other hand, they too understand it as inconsequential to the interpretation of his later – and according to Steizinger more meaningful – works. In the chapter dedicated to Benjamin, I will try to demonstrate how his theory of youth is a form of critique of theology in that it offers social criticism of mystical lore. It is my aim here to capture the combination of both elements. On the one hand, Benjamin sees “youth” as giving secular expression to divine nothingness as found in Christian mysticism, such as that of Meister Eckhart. “Nothingness” in Benjamin’s writing refers to man’s divine nucleus, which defies definition, expression, or recognition and transcends transience and historical time, embodying a concept beyond comprehension. On the other hand, this mystical “nothingness” allows Benjamin to formulate his social and political critique in these early works. Critique in this context indicates liberation from social and political forces imposed on mankind, which distance us from the youthful – that is, the divine – elements within us. As in the critical tradition that would crystalize only years later, critique in this context indicates liberation from oppressive social and political forces.

But Benjamin’s critique is committed to the notion of a mystical nothingness, which means he essentially draws on a mystical vocabulary. Such a critique of theology calls for resistance within the political sphere as such (which implies primarily resistance to the political options offered to young Jews of his time). As I wish to demonstrate, such comprehensive resistance is bound up with the themes of salvation and messianism in Benjamin’s work, more precisely, with the expectation for a messianic eruption contained within each and every moment – an expectation that to Benjamin can only be fulfilled inasmuch as it remains unfulfilled.

If Freud and Benjamin’s works showcase the interplay between critique and religion and theology in the beginning of the twentieth century, the works of Theodor Adorno and Hannah Arendt from the 1960s demonstrate the continuation of this interrelation into the latter half of the twentieth century, within a different social and political context. These two thinkers may have cultivated a mutual personal animosity (to which they held on with such zeal for reasons only they understood), but they also manifested, each in his or her own way, a shared critical-theological legacy. To use a musical metaphor, I see these two cases as the “coda” tying together a great intellectual symphony on the critique of a secular-modern world in crisis, whose overtones have always resonated with religion and theology.

Adorno’s writing on education constitutes the first site for charting the relationship between critique and theology in his thought. Education for Adorno needs to be rethought and reconsidered in the wake of “Auschwitz.” It was, therefore, repeatedly addressed by Adorno in a range of written and oral venues in the decade spanning 1959-1969. These included Adorno’s public lectures and talks, broadcasted mainly (but not exclusively) by the Public Radio services of Hessen; his extensive paper “Theory of Pseudo-Education” (*Theorie der Halbbildung*);[[45]](#footnote-45) and his university lectures from that time that anticipated his “Negative Dialectics.”[[46]](#footnote-46) Adorno’s intellectual position – one could, perhaps more fairly say self-positioning – in postwar, for him post-Nazi Germany, invited him to seriously reflect on the meaning and aim of education as a central philosophical theme.[[47]](#footnote-47)

Yet Adorno’s perspectives on education have not been widely researched. His radio lectures, some of which deal directly, and others more implicitly, with education, are a representative example. They are largely considered a more popular, and hence less important facet of Adorno’s thought, an aspect of the role of public intellectual Adorno took upon himself. As a means of overcoming the confines of a republic of letters and addressing the wider public of the new Federal Republic, Adorno turned rather surprisingly to the radio, a medium he himself pejoratively described as “the progressive latecomer of mass culture” and “the voice of the nation” where “a recommendation becomes an order.”[[48]](#footnote-48)

Despite this, I wish to demonstrate how Adorno’s treatment of the question of education “after Auschwitz” in these lectures and texts reveals the “fingerprints” of his own “dynamic spirit.”[[49]](#footnote-49) “A radical Adorno,” to use Russel Berman’s words, is revealed in the way he articulates the relationship between critique and theology with regard to education, or philosophical issues pertaining to education. Here I will employ the concept of critique of theology in order to identify how Adorno himself defines critique as a translation of theological concepts.

For this end, the chapter on Adorno will cover three main questions. First, critique and theology come together in the field of education because Adorno links education to metaphysics, and metaphysics to theology. For Adorno, it is through education that metaphysics “has slipped into material existence.”[[50]](#footnote-50) In this sense, education is metaphysics inasmuch as it is socially conceived and practically applied. This carries various meanings for Adorno, including criticism of an education that produces individuals who are subordinated to existing social conditions. Most importantly, Adorno defines metaphysics as a critical attitude indicating a “secularization” of theology. “Secularization” is meant here as a translation of theology into critical terms that constitutes not only the preservation of theology but also, to use Adorno’s own word, its “rescue.” The main educational concept then, constructed by Adorno is that of a critique of theology. Adorno’s idea of critique is not just derived from theology but meant to “rescue” it. Put differently, education can offer critique when coming in the form of “secularization,” that is, the re-articulation of theology in social terms.

Second, the history of modern education points, according to Adorno, to an intrinsic problem of education in its critical-theological form. This brings us back to the problem mentioned above, of an education that produces individuals who are subordinated to existing social conditions. At the heart of Adorno’s discussion is the German concept of education, “Bildung,” and its offspring term “Halbbildung,” which may be understood as “pseudo-education,” or, to use more contemporary language, “fake-education.” Fake-education encompasses theological ideas taken to the point of requiring humankind to subordinate itself entirely to overwhelmingly oppressive social conditions. More bluntly, the individual as nothing more than a pawn. The main problem identified by Adorno in this process is that the above-described critical-theological substance of education undergoes a distortion. The “secularization” of the theological dimension in education reaches the point of absolute submission to existing conditions, with no possibility for deviation.

On the other hand, the rescue of education involves the ability to rediscover this critical-theological substance, paving the way for restitution and liberating the individual from oppression. Horkheimer’s piercing description applies here as well – “Emancipation from the circumstances that enslave us.”[[51]](#footnote-51) Due to the theological element in Adorno, I posit that the most fitting image for the aim of educational critique is that of the “Anthropos ex machina” – which illustrates not the dramatic emergence of God out of a machine, but the individual’s deliverance from a completely mechanized world. Such deliverance is manifested in two main areas, which will form the focus of the last section of the chapter. The first relates to how Adorno defines “negativity” with respect to education. Rescuing theology from the clutch of education is possible only if framed negatively as the unattainability of that which it insists to pursue. Here, not only is Adorno’s “negative theology” put to the test, but more pertinently, his idea of “attaining the unattainable,” which, according to scholars such as Wolfson, draws on Jewish mysticism. The second area appertains, unsurprisingly, to the concept of love. Especially when discussing education after Auschwitz, Adorno highlights the critical endeavor as a form of love. While this idea has largely escaped scholarly attention, it serves Adorno particularly in giving meaning to critique – or critical self-reflection – in education. I argue that love is neither a new, nor an arbitrary concept in Adorno’s thought. It is largely articulated as a response to Kierkegaard’s theological doctrine, which Adorno treats directly in his 1939 article “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love.”[[52]](#footnote-52) Adorno’s framing of critique in education as a form of love corresponds in particular to Kierkegaard’s “failure” to formulate a doctrine that amounts to meaningful social critique. In pointing out Kierkegaard’s failure, Adorno does not mean to distance critique from theology. On the contrary, he wishes to redeem the intimate connection between the two. The purpose of this redeeming is not to validate faith or the religious attainment of salvation, but to articulate the conditions that would allow education to battle against the indifference to others’ suffering. This aspect in particular corresponds to the widely researched “Young Hegelian” tradition.[[53]](#footnote-53) Moreover, it illuminates the relation between the concept of critique and questions of theology and negative theology, mystical traditions (both Christian and Jewish), and the possibility and impossibility of salvation.

The last chapter is dedicated to Arendt’s political thought in the 1960s, specifically the ways in which it dealt with the idea of “tradition.” Though well-known, Arendt’s treatment of tradition has not been widely researched, especially when compared to scholarly interest in her ideas of will, thinking, judgment, and action. Yet it is her concept of tradition that marks one of the prevailing themes in Arendt’s political writings published in the 1960s. This cluster of writings includes her “Between Past and Future” (1961/1968); “On Revolution” (1963); “Men in Dark Times” (1968); “On Violence” (1969); and “Crises of the Republic” (1969).[[54]](#footnote-54)

These books were typically made up of different chapters approaching an array of theoretical issues alongside “mundane” topics, some of which were published in the press beforehand. At this stage of Arendt’s writing she preferred to avoid producing another “big” work, choosing instead to write essay collections (a preference that in some ways also applies to the *Report on the Banality of Evil*).[[55]](#footnote-55) As a result, the scholarly community is divided as to the importance of these writings for understanding the “life of the mind” of Arendt herself.[[56]](#footnote-56)

Yet, it was Dann Villa who pointed out that exactly these political writings underline Arendt’s move “from totalitarianism to the tradition.”[[57]](#footnote-57) “Between Past and Future” is in this context central. It enclosed much of Arendt’s unfinished project on “Marx and the Great Traditions” and represented for Arendt “the best of her books.”[[58]](#footnote-58) The volume, whose first edition was already published in 1961, reflected Arendt’s wish to compose an “introduction” to political theory (independent from, and in Arendt’s mind “conflicting” to, philosophy). Such a wish underlined not only her new focus on political traditions as the central arena of her thought but also displayed the extent to which her thoughts on tradition were intertwined with her theorization of politics.[[59]](#footnote-59)

In analyzing these selected texts, I hope to demonstrate how Arendt’s idea of tradition constitutes yet another complex interaction between critique and theology, to the extent of offering another version of a critique of theology. Here, the concept of critique will illuminate how Arendt offers a critique of modernity in her political writings, which draws on Roman tripartite theology.

Diversely, critique amounts to an analysis of “the past” and “of traditional concepts,” a type of critical thinking that was “as important to Sokrates as it was for Kant.”[[60]](#footnote-60) The relevant past and “traditional” concepts relate to the long forgotten political, philosophical and theological “treasures” that according to Arendt got lost in modernity. Offering critique for Arendt means in this context scrutinizing these three (political, philosophical, and theological) venues of a lost tradition. Theology points to the manner in which this understanding of critique draws on her reference to the Roman religious division between political theology, philosophical theology and mythical theology. Critique draws on this Roman heritage in two main ways. First, in scrutinizing the disappearance of this particular tradition from modernity and its destructive consequences. Second, and more importantly, in constituting its analysis of the Roman religious logic, vocabulary and political imagination. The Roman tripartite theology provides the basis not only to Arendt’s argument regarding what modernity had lost, but more profoundly to her critical analysis of such a loss. Though it was her teacher Karl Jaspers who suggested a three-part philosophy (divided into reflection on the world, existence and metaphysics), it was Arendt who took the (for her lost) theological sources of this division to bear on a concept of critique.[[61]](#footnote-61) In this particular sense Arendt brought theology to bear on a critique of modernity. We are dealing here then with a type of a critique of theology that could be considered as an attempt “to restore the tradition’s dignity after its rupture.”[[62]](#footnote-62)

In the first section of the chapter, I will therefore try to establish that by tradition, Arendt means Roman tripartite theology. According to the Romans, as well as Arendt, tradition implies the inter-generational transference of sanctity and revelation, which assumes political (as a form of political theology), philosophical (as a form of philosophical theology), and mythological (as a form of mythological theology) significance. It was this tradition, Arendt argues, that Augustine absorbed covertly, and unwillingly, into his thought. And it was Augustine whom she saw as representing a “fundamental cord which sounds in its endless modulations through the whole history of Western thought.”[[63]](#footnote-63)

Augustine’s significance to Arendt’s discussion of the Roman past on the one hand, and of her critique of modernity on the other, cannot be overestimated.[[64]](#footnote-64) To Arendt, Augustine is first and foremost a Roman thinker. Particularly in her political writings, and in her interest in Roman tradition and its modern implications, Arendt further develops the arguments presented in her 1928 study of Augustine’s concept of love.[[65]](#footnote-65) She returned to this study in the 1960s in her meticulous editing of Augustine’s various English translations, a project she never completed.[[66]](#footnote-66) Arendt was by all means an elective, perhaps even eclectic thinker, who drew on a highly diverse fountain of sources.[[67]](#footnote-67) But in her discussion of tradition, her “debt” to Augustine is apparent.[[68]](#footnote-68) This may suggest that Augustine was to Arendt a “hidden continent of thought,” as put by Dana Villa, and that her early work on Augustine’s concept of love is far more significant than conventionally thought.[[69]](#footnote-69)

Arendt would then argue that the Roman tripartite theological tradition serves as the foundation for Augustine’s Christianity, however “covertly.” In this respect, it seems that Julia Kristeva’s depiction of Arendt as a “post-Christian” thinker is justified, providing that the prefix “post” indicates Arendt’s connection to Christian theology’s Roman heritage.[[70]](#footnote-70) The point underlined here is that Augustine’s theological tradition extends “across centuries,” up to the crisis of modernity. The next section of the chapter will then deal with how the disappearance of the Roman tripartite theological tradition as manifested in Augustine forms the foundation for Arendt’s critique of the crisis of modernity. I will argue that to Arendt, modernity leads to “crisis” because it lost its connection to the Roman theological tradition. As the chapter will show, Arendt’s critique does not only point out the disappearance of political theology, philosophical theology, and mythological theology from modern life. No less significantly, her critique draws on Roman theological concepts that find their expression in all of their manifestations (political, philosophical, mythological) in the world.

This last aspect is particularly pertinent to Arendt’s discussion of “secularization” and secularism, which constitutes the focus of the last section of the chapter. Arendt’s approach to the idea of secularization is dual. On the one hand, secularization implies in Arendt’s writing the ongoing erosion of Christian dogma in public life. Yet antithetically, secularization also indicates a return (as in, for example, the context of the modern revolutions) to Roman traditions. When Arendt frames the modern revolutions as aspiring to usher in a new secular age, she notes the link between these revolutions and the Roman worldview. Under the concept of secularization, Arendt links between the modern world and a lost Roman tradition. In this sense, she posits an opportunity to salvage modernity from its deadlock. This also bears implications in the context of such concepts as evil and messianism. This is not to say, in my view, that Arendt wished to revive Roman tradition. Rather, it seems that her aim is to give expression to the ways in which this lost theological tradition, which has a certain affinity to ideas of sanctity and revelation, can enable a critique on modern life as a means of providing it with a new foundation. In other words, critique is somewhat theological in Arendt’s thought. It offers not just a connection to the past, but a rediscovery of the possibility for revelation.

Freud, Benjamin, Adorno, and Arendt represent four different kinds of connections between critique and theology, which touch upon Jewish and Christian traditions, worldly and divine law, mysticism, negative theology, and tripartite theology. In this manner, they arguably manifest a Judeo-Christian intellectual legacy. But the main significance here lies in the critical-theological exchange exhibited in each of these cases. These different manifestations emerge out of a deep sense of crisis, or (particularly in the cases of Adorno and Arendt after the Second World War) catastrophe. It is therefore plausible that these thinkers represent a way of thought suitable for times of crisis. The extent to which it can apply in our time largely depends on the social and political crises (some would say catastrophes) we now face. Yet I would venture that it is at least feasible that in our day and age, when religion and religiosity are fast regaining their importance in the cultural and political sphere, contemplating the synergy between critique and theology in modern thought means to consider a critical-theological dialogue that may also be called for “beyond the borders” of the German-Jewish cultural sphere of the examined thinkers. For example, in lieu of the darkness descending upon us in the form of religious fundamentalism on the one hand, or the growing loathing towards everything religious on the other, can an alternative emerge in the form of the constant tension at play between critique and theology? Such tension can generate an ongoing, fruitful discussion (as opposed to antagonism and struggle) between different perspectives and traditions of thought. Critique and theology can light a path ahead of each other, grab the hem of each other’s skirt – in any case, neither demands exclusivity in all matters human.

1. Michel Foucault, “What Is Critique,” in James Schmidt, ed., *What Is Enlightenment? Eighteenth-Century Answers and Twentieth-Century Questions.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996, 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Talal Assad, Wendy Braun et. al. *Is Critique Secular: Blasphemy, Injury and Free Speech*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Dirk Moses, “Genocide and Modernity”, in: Dan Stone, ed., The Historiography of Genocide (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), 184. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation,” *Theological Studies,* 36.4 (1975): 605-626; Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant’s Critical Religion.* Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000; Marc P. Lalonde, (ed.) *The Promise of Critical Theology: Essays in Honor of Charles Davis*. Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1995; Marc P. Lalonde, *From Critical Theology to a Critical Theory of Religion: Essays in Contemporary Religious Thought,* London: Peter Lang, 2010; Carl A. Raschke, *Critical Theology: Introducing an Agenda for an Age of Global Crisis.* Downers Grove IL: Intervarsity Press, 2016; Itzhak Benyamini, *A Critical Theology of Genisis: The Non-Absolute God*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. See for example in: Fiorenza, “Feminist Theology”; Palmquist, *Kant’s Critical Religion*; Raschke, *Critical Theology*. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See also the point made in: Itzhak Benyamini & Yotam Hotam “An Outline for Critical Theology from an Israeli Jewish Perspective”, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 14.2 (2015): 333-339. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Paul North, *The Yield: Kafka’s Atheological Reformation.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2015, 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Foucault, “What Is Critique,” 382. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998, 101; Immanuel Kant, *Kritik der Reinen Vernunft,* Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 1998, 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Kant, *Critique,* 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Ibid, 105. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. “…daß man wählen müsse zwischen der Religion und der Philosophie, zwischen dem geoffenbarten Dogma des Glaubens und der letzten Konsequenz des Denkens, zwischen dem absoluten Bibelgott und dem Atheismus.“ Heinrich Heine, „Nachwort zum Romanzero“, in: ders. *Romanzero.* Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1852, 302. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Leo Strauss, “Reason and Revelation,” in Heinrich Meier, *Leo Strauss and the Theological Political Problem,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2016, 149. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Kant, *Critique*, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kant, *Critique*, 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Immanuel Kant, “What Real Progress has Metaphysics made in Germany since the time of Leibniz and Wolff? In: Immanuel Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy After 1781*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002. 394. Somewhat different to the definition of theology in his Critique of Judgment, theology appears here as a knowledge “of the inscrutable determining ground of our willing, which we find, in ourselves alone” and that assumes its final end in “the supreme being above us.” On this basis, theologian Stephen R. Palmquist argues that the last (third) stage that Kant suggests corresponds to a “Critical Theology”. See: Stephen R. Palmquist, *Kant’s Critical Religion.* Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2000, 7; Ders., “Kant's ‘Appropriation’ of Lampe's God”, The Harvard Theological Review 85.1 (1992): 85-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Immanuel Kant, *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Immanuel Kant, *The Conflict of the Faculties.* Lincoln & London: University of Nebraska Press, 1979, 45. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. David Sorkin, *The Religious Enlightenment: Protestants, Jews and Catholics from*

    *London to Vienna*.Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008, 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Paul Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions: Jewish Intellectuals and the Experience of Modernity*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. See for example: Steven E. Aschheim, *Beyond the Borders: The German-Jewish Legacy Abroad.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2008. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See for example: Yossef Haif Yerushalmi, *Freud’s Moses: Judaism Terminable and Interminable,* New Haven: Yale UP, 1993; Eric L. Santner, *On the Psychotheology of Everyday Life: Reflections on Freud and Rosenzweig*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Peter E. Gordon, “The Concept of the Apolitical: German Jewish Thought and Weimar Political Theology”, *Social Research,* 74.3 (2007): 871. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Micha Brunlik, „Verborgene Tradition und messianisches Licht: Arendt, Adorno und ihr Judentum“, in: Dirk Auer, Lars Rensmann und Julia Schulye Wessel (hrgs.) *Arend und Adorno.* Frankfurt aM.: Suhrkamp, 2003, 74-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. I thank Kirk Wetters for this observation. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Detlev Schöttker und Edmunt Wizisla, *Arendt und Benjamin: Texte, Briefe, Dokumente*. Frankfurt aM.: Suhrkamp, 2006, 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. See for example: Michael W. Jennings. *Dialectical Images: Walter Benjamin’s Theory of Literary Criticism,* Ithaca & London: Cornell UP, 1987; Richard Wolin, *Walter Benjamin: An Aesthetic of Redemption*, NY: Columbia UP, 1982; Eli Freidlander. *Walter Benjamin: A philosophical portrait*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012; Benjamin Andrew and Osborne Peter, (eds.), *Walter Benjamin’s Philosophy: Destruction and Experience.* London and New York: Routledge, 1994.

    On the controversy see for example: Jennings. *Dialectical*, 5; Reiner Dieckhoff, *Mythos und Moderne: Über die Verborgene Mystik in den Schrifter Walter Benjamins*, Köln: Janus Press, 1987, 13.

    Asaf Angermann (Hrg.), *Theodor W. Adorno, Gershom Scholem Briefwechsel, 1939-1969.* Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2015, 74-75, 78-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. On the controversy see for example: Jennings. *Dialectical*, 5; Reiner Dieckhoff, *Mythos und Moderne: Über die Verborgene Mystik in den Schrifter Walter Benjamins*, Köln: Janus Press, 1987, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Asaf Angermann (Hrg.), *Theodor W. Adorno, Gershom Scholem Briefwechsel, 1939-1969.* Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 2015, 74-75, 78-79. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Peter Gordon, “The Odd Couple”, *The Nation,* June 9 2016. <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-odd-couple/> [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. North, *The Yield*, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2014, 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Mendes-Flohr, *Divided Passions*, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Eliot R. Wolfson, *Poetic Thinking,* Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015, 180. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. See for example: Samuel Moyn, “Hannah Arendt on the Secular”, *New German Critique* (2008) 35 3.105: 71-96; Douglas Klusmeyer,"Hannah Arendt's Case for Federalism." *The Journal of Federalism* 40.1 (2009): 31-58;Miguel Vatter, “Roman Civil Religion and the Question of Jewish Politics in Arendt” *Philosophy Today* Volume 62.2 (2018): 573-606. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Rose Sven Erick, *Jewish Philosophical Politics in Germany 1789-1848.* Waltham Mass.: Brandeis UP, 2014, 1. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Michel de Certeau, *The Writings of History.* Columbia UP, 1988, xxvi. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A noteworthy exception are Elliott Oring’s studies that focused on the relations between Freud’s study of Jokes and his Jewish identity. See: Elliott Oring, “Jokes and Their Relation to Sigmund Freud”, *Western Folklore*, 43.1 (1984): 37-48; Elliott Oring, *The Jokes of Sigmund Freud: A Study in Humor and Jewish Identity.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Robert M. Cover, “The Supreme Court, 1982 Term -- Foreword: Nomos and Narrative”, *Harvard Law Review,* 97.4 (1983): 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Santner, *Psychotheology,* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Santner, *Psychotheology,* 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. See for example the point made by Jennings, *Dialectical,* 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. Johannes Steizinger, “Zwischen emanzipatorischem Appell und melancholischem Verstummen Walter Benjamins Jugendschriften.” In D. Weidner and S. Weigel (eds.), *Benjamin-Studien*.München: Wilhem Fink Verlag, 2011, 225-238; Johannes Steizinger, *Revolte Eros und Sprache*. Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2013. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Theodor W. Adorno, „Theorie der Halbbildung.“ (1959) In: ders. *Gesammelte Schriften*, Band 8; Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998, 93-121. Translated as: Theodor W. Adorno, “Theory of Pseudo-Culture”, *Telos* 20 (1993):15-38. *Halbbildung* indicated in the German context of the 19th and early 20th century a shallow or superficial education that, unlike the ideal of *Bildung* (which relates to self-cultivation and denotes both culture and education) serves only narrow, materialistic interests. Because of the broad meaning of *Bildung* (as culture and education)*,* a theory of *Halbbildung* couldbetranslated as both a theory of Pseudo-culture and of Pseudo-education. In this book *Halbbildung* would be more closely read as “Pseudo-Education”, in alignment with the specific educational meaning of the concept of *Bildung* (as self-cultivation) that is relevant to the understanding of Adorno’s critique. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. See also the claim made in Daniel K. Cho, “Adorno on Education or, Can Critical Self-Reflection Prevent the Next Auschwitz?”, *Historical Materialism,* 17 (2009): 75. Adorno’s visits to the Hessischen Rundfunk included yearly oral lectures and discussions with Helmut Becker and Gerd Kadelbach. Additional broadcasters were the Westdeutscher Rundfunk, the Süddutscher Rundfunk and Sender freies Berlin. The recordings were revised by Adorno and published in part in writing. The first oral lecture in 1959 was titled: “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit”, and a decade of such lectures ended with “Erziehung zur Mündigkeit” – the last speech that Adorno gave before his death couple of weeks later in July 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. See for example: Helmut Schreier & Matthias Heyl, (Eds.) *Never Again! The Holocaust’s Challenge for Educators,* Hamburg: Krämer, 1997, 3-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Max Horkheimer & Theodor Adorno, “The Culture Industry” in: ders. *The Dialectics of Enlightenment,* New York: Continuum,1993, 20. Adorno’s scholarly interest in this medium of mass culture was already in full display when he participated in the “Princeton Radio Project” which took issue with the listening habits of Americans in the early 1930s. See also Brian O’Connor (ed). *The Adorno Reader,* Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 8. On the relative marginality of his radio speeches in research see for example: Gerd Kadelbach’s introduction in: Theodor W. Adorno *Erziehung zur Mündigkeit: Vorträge und Gespräeche mit Hellmut Becker 1959-1969,* Frankfurt a.M; Suhrkamp, 1970, 7-9. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. “Fingerabdruck des lebendigen Geistes.” Adorno, “*Erziehung zur Mündigkeit”,* 8. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Theodor Adorno, *Metaphysics: Concept and Problems*, Malden MA.,: Polity Press 2000, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Russel A. Berman, “Adorno’s Radicalism: Two Interviews from the Sixties”, *Telos*, 56: 95; See also: Cho, “Adorno on Education”, 74. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love,” [*Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung,* 8](https://archive.org/details/ZeitschriftFrSozialforschung8.Jg).3 1939: 413-429. Adorno’s first publication “Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetics” was published in 1933 and presented a reworked version of his habilitation. His essay on Kierkegaard’s doctrine of love was published six years later and showed Adorno’s particular focus on Kierkegaard’s Christianity. On the importance of Kierkegaard for Adorno “throughout his life” see for example: Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. See for example: Peter Gordon, “The Old Couple”, *The Nation,* June 9 2016. https://www.thenation.com/article/the-odd-couple/ [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Viking Press, 1963; Hanna Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*: A Report on the Banality of Evil, New York: Viking Press, 1963; Hanna Arendt, *Men in Dark Times,* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968; Hanna Arendt, *Between Past and Future*, New York: Viking Press, 1968; Hannah Arendt, *On Violence,* New York: Harcourt, 1969; Hanna Arendt, *Crises of the Republic*, New York: Harcourt 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. See Elisabethe Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Lover of the World*. Vail-Ballou Press: Binghamton 1982, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. See Elisabethe Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Lover of the World*. Vail-Ballou Press: Binghamton 1982, 280. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Villa, *The Cambridge Companion,* 5. See Also the emphasis on Arendt’s shift from her more “historical” works composed in the 1930s-1950s (Most notably, Rahel Varnhagen’s biography written in the 1930s and the “Origins of Totalitarianism” composed in the 1940s) in: Young- Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 280-285. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See: Young-Bruhel, *Hannah Arendt,* 324-327, 472; Stephan Kampowski, *Arendt, Augustine, and the New Beginning: The Action Theory and Moral Thought of Hannah Arendt in the Light of her dissertation on St. Augustine.* Grand Rapids, Michicgan/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008*,* 10. Arendt had planned to write a book on “the Totalitarian Elements in Marxism” already in 1951. The project, however, never matured also because of Arendt’s shift from her early emphasis on totalitarianism, to her thoughts on the “Western tradition of political philosophy itself.” See: Villa, *The Cambridge,* 7. Her developing work on “Marx and the Great Tradition” from the mid and late 1950s served as a basis, inter alia, to her *Between Past and Future* and some of the chapters in *On* *Revolution*, reflecting in such a way her new focus on tradition and its implication to political thought. See: Margaret Canovan, *Hannah Arendt: A Reinterpretation of her Political Thought.* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992, 64; Dana R. Villa, *Politics, Philosophy, Terror: Essays on the Thought of Hannah Arendt.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999, 192. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Arendt repeatedly insists in the 1960s on being a political theorist, rather than a philosopher. See also: Sigwart Hans-Jörg, *The Wandering Thought of Hannah Arendt.* London: Macmillan, 2016, 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant’s Political Philosophy.* Chicago: Chicago UP 1989, 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Karl Jaspers, *Philosophie 3 Bände* *(I. Philosophische Weltorientierung. II. Existenzerhellung. III. Metaphysik).* Berlin: Springer, 1932. Arendt was Jaspers‘ student when he was working on his opus magnum. See for example in: Arendt, *Men in Dark Times*, 78; Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 65l-63; Kampowski, *Arendt,* 1-2. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Dirk A. Moses, “*Das römische* *Gespräch* in a New Key: Hannah Arendt, Genocide, and the Defense of Republican civilization”, *The Journal of Modern History* 85.4 (2013): 878. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Arendt, *Between,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. See her unpublished letter to Erwin Loewenson from October 27, 1927. Cited in: Tatjana Noemy Tömmel, “Vita Passiva: Love in Arendt’s Denktagebuch” in: Berkowitz Roger & Storey Ilan (eds.), *Artifacts of Thinking: Reading Hannah Arendt’s Denktagebuch.* New York: Fordham University Press, 2017, 106 [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Hannah Arendt, *Der Liebesbegriff bei Augustin.* Berlin: J. Springer, 1929. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. In the late 1950s Arendt received a translated manuscript that she then endlessly reworked and rewrote during the 1960s. See for example the editor’s notes in: Arendt, *Love,* 118-119; Roy T. Tsao, “Arendt’s Augustine”, in: Seyla Benhabib (ed.), *Politics in Dark Times: Encounters with Hannah Arendt,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010*,* 41; Kampowski, *Arendt,* 13-16, who suggests that Arendt just “gave up.” Jaspers, no doubt wittingly wrote to Arendt that in her reworked versions “…you are now able to say better what you back then already meant.” See in: Köhler und Saner, *Correspondence,* 661. The letter is dated January 25, 1966. A carefully edited English version of Arendt’s work was published only posthumously: Hannah Arendt, *Love and St. Augustine,* Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See for example: Villa, *Hannah Arendt,* 1; Christopher Irwin, “Reading Hannah Arendt as a Biblical Thinker”*, Sophia,* 2015, 54: 545; Steve Buckler, *Hannah Arendt and Political Theory: Challenging the Tradition*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2011, 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Irwin, “Reading”*,* 546-54. See also: Tsao, “Arendt’s Augustine”, 39-57; Tatjana Noemi Tömmel, “Vita Passiva. Love in Arendt’s Denktagebuch“, In: von Roger Berkowitz und Ian Storey (hrsg.) *Artifacts of Thinking. Reading Hannah Arendt’s Denktagebuch*. New York: Fordham University Press 2017, 107; Canovan, *Hannah Arendt*, 8; Kampowski, *Arendt, ,* 6, who points out that already in her 1935 paper “Ideology and Terror” (in: Klaus Piper (ed.), *Offener Horizont, Festschrift für Karl Jaspers*, München: Piper, 1953, 238) Arendt endows Augustine with being the source for her notion of a “new beginning”, birth and natality; Helen Banner, “Existential Failure and success: Augustinianism in Oakeshott and Arendt”, *Intellectual History Review,* 21:2 (2011): 171; Sarah Elizabeth Spengeman, Saint Augustine and Hannah Arendt On Love of the World: An Investigation Into Arendt’s Reliance on and Refutation of Augustinian Philosophy, Dissertation, University of Notre Dame, 2014.

    See for example Richard Wolin, *Heidegger’s Children.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001, 42, who referred to her dissertation as an “un-Arendtian document”. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. See for example Richard Wolin, *Heidegger’s Children.* Princeton: Princeton UP, 2001, 42, who referred to her dissertation as an “un-Arendtian document”. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Julia Kristeva, *Female Genius: Life, Madness, Words – Hannah Arendt, Melanie Klein, Gabrielle Colette; A Trilogy,* vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)