**Chapter 3: Education ex Machina**

**I. Between Critique and Theology**

a. After Auschwitz

Critique and its relation to theology constitutes a central, albeit understudied, elements in Adorno’s postwar addresses on and within the field of education in the decade spanning 1959-1969. Adorno speaks to education – regarded by him, rather broadly, as the arena of human cultivation – in a wide range of texts, public and classroom lectures, written or orally delivered by him. This variety of highly popular and rigorously academic engagements with educational and cultivating themes included his series of annual public lectures and talks, broadcasted mainly (but not exclusively) by the Public Radio services of Hessen, his published work from that time, the most representative of which is his extensive paper *Theorie der Halbbildung*, as well as in his university survey courses that anticipated his *Negative* *Dialectics*.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Positioning himself, one could argue, as a public intellectual in an upstart Federal Germany, Adorno devoted these different reflections to the mission of “no more Auschwitz.” Thus, for Adorno, the so called “premier demand” from education is that “Auschwitz not happen again.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Auschwitz represented for Adorno an evocative symbol for the extermination of human beings and he was clearly suggestive here of a new categorical imperative, aiming at precluding the potential for another such catastrophe from happening. Especially because of this overarching mission, however, Adorno’s lectures, talks and written compositions devoted to an education “after Auschwitz” are not exhausted by a narrow focus on issues of teaching and learning alone, even if he certainly addresses these issues, for example in his radio talks (particularly in referring to the education of young children).[[3]](#footnote-3) It would be also wrong to claim that Adorno has any interest in confining his thoughts to education as an academic discipline, or as a profession, nor did he wish to develop a new comprehensive theory of pedagogical practice, didactics or teaching methods, albeit his talks on education certainly relate to such concerns. Rather, especially in the context of human cultivation and in relating to it Adorno openly addresses a central aspect of his postwar thinking, devoted not only to the understanding of the conditions that made Auschwitz possible, but also to the overcoming these “conditions.”[[4]](#footnote-4) In his different engagements with education (as a cultural theme, a popular public address, or a classroom practice) there is then a “radical Adoron” – to use Russel Berman’s words – to consider, one who presents some of his most intimate and fundamental takes on history, society and politics from that time.

The vicissitudes of critique in its relation to theology, from Antiquity to modernity, offered Adorno with the leitmotiv for these different discussions. The centrality of this topic seems to be made rather explicitly in Adorno’s classroom survey courses mentioned above. From its Greek origins, critique, Adorno openly argues, is the essence of metaphysical inquiry dedicated to “The teaching of good life” (*Die Lehre vom richtigen Leben*).[[5]](#footnote-5) This is, for him, the main issue to be taught. Adorno then presents the students with two clear argumentations that connect between a critique that is devoted to such a “teaching” and its theological sources. The first main point that Adorno makes relates to the definition of metaphysics. Adorno defines metaphysics as a “critical practice”, denoting “the form of philosophy which takes concepts as its objects.”[[6]](#footnote-6) Under the concept of critique Adorno thinks of an instrument of reason that may clarify concepts, including their scope of validity, tested content and limits. It is in this sense that Kant, for example, spoke of a quest for metaphysics that “cleans” a territory from former errors. But Adorno connects such an understanding of critique with the original quest of the Greek philosophy for “the first principles and causes” which Kant dismissed.[[7]](#footnote-7) Metaphysics represents therefor for Adorno not just a critical examination of concepts, but one that assigns them “to a higher order of being.”[[8]](#footnote-8) This critical quest for that which “transcends life” is for Adorno the hub of metaphysics.[[9]](#footnote-9)

It is for this reason that theology provides metaphysical (i.e. critical) inquiry with its basis. This is then the second point that Adorno accentuates. Theology represents for Adorno a “mythical” way of thinking of the beginning of Being (as a first cause of all things) in terms of the myth of the gods. Those are the gods who transcend life and offer a “higher order of being.” The search for the “first principles and causes” of “how to live rightly” and the assigning them to “higher” order was originally a central feature of thinking of god, or else of theology. In its critical dedication to the same issues, however, metaphysics took over such theological thinking. It substituted theological explanations with a critical investigation provided by human reason alone. Yet, the point to note is that for Adorno, this means that critique relates to its theological precursor in a unique way which he terms “secularization”:

“It is undeniable that metaphysics itself is a phenomenon of the secularization of mythical and magical thinking, so that it is not so absolutely detached from superstitious ideas as it understands itself to be, and as it has presented itself in the history of philosophy.” [[10]](#footnote-10)

A notion of a “secularization” that is not “absolutely detached” from its theological sources is here paramount.[[11]](#footnote-11) It denotes the intricacy dominating the relations between critical and “mythical” thinking. On the one hand secularization is about scrutinizing being by means of reason, rather than by believing in the myth of a godly creation – a disenchantment of the world as it were. On the other hand, in being “not so absolutely detached” from mythical explanation, it still reverberates its theological forerunner, and as far as the explaining of being is concerned, adversary. Secularization, Adorno would then add, is also a “translation” of theology rather than its full rejection:

“It could be therefore said that metaphysics is a translation of theological conceptions into categories of reason, that it is a conceptualization of those conceptions.”[[12]](#footnote-12)

Critique means therefore a “translation” or else a reconceptualization of theological conceptions.[[13]](#footnote-13) Translation in this case does not fully ignore its translated theological substance, but rather transmutes it. Like in Benjamin’s early writings, there is a certain original meaning – which Benjamin articulates in terms of a “pure” substance, an “ash”, or residue – that the translation releases from its former appearance. This reflects for Benjamin on what he would later term as “The Task of the Translator.” For Adorno such a task of translation attests to the fact that theological “conceptions” are not dismissed by metaphysics but are rather reframed through their reconceptualization.

Critique in this specific sense can be traced back to its theological origins even if in a compound manner. But Adorno goes even further and argues that critique is not only a reformulation of theology. It is specifically designed for the rescuing of theology:

“Metaphysics in the precise sense I have set out here is both a critique and a reprise, a resumption, of theology. It is a peculiarity of metaphysical thinking, [….] , that the conceptual operations it performs, which aim initially at something like a critique of mythological beings, repeatedly end in reinstating these mythical beings, or the divinity; but it no longer does so in a belief in the direct experience of the sensible perceptibility or the substantial existence of the divinities or divinity, but *on the basis of conceptual thought*.[[14]](#footnote-14)

And Adorno adds:

“What I said earlier about the rescuing intention which accompanies the critical aim of all metaphysics now takes on its precise meaning, which is quite simply that metaphysics attempts to rescue through concepts what it simultaneously calls into question through its critique.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

Critique is not only about replacing theological thinking with categories of reason. It is also about “rescuing” theological concepts that are replaced by critical terminology. Metaphysics as a form of critique maintains a double mission of working against and, in so doing, holding to the same object – that is theology. This double mission is represented by what Adorno describes to the students as “the unity of a critical and a rescuing intention.”[[16]](#footnote-16) Such a unity is maintained because the “conceptualization” of theological “conceptions” must still uphold their original meanings.

The reference to critique as a conception of theological concepts seems to be the decisive point in Adorno’s teachings. It denotes an arena of thinking in which theology is not refuted but rather rethought. To rethink an object of reference, by means of critique, indicates for Adorno that the object of this rethinking endures. The crux of the matter lies in the idea that the reconsidering of the theological conceptions works only by means of disbelief in these concepts. Differently put, critique preserves theology by working against it.[[17]](#footnote-17) This is a rather clear dialectic articulation of the relations between critique and theology, in which critique represents concomitantly the ending and resuming of theology. In critique, theological conceptions are held by means of their dismissal.

Even if the argument that Adorno makes refers to the Greek origins of critique, it is clear, at least in the context of his own teaching, that what is at stake for him are the modern political implications. Arguably, Adorno’s lectures are engaged with one burning question: Whether and in what way it could be possible to save the teaching of metaphysics in the face of “Auschwitz” that changed it “to its inner most core” and that made “the presence of a positive meaning or purpose in being” clearly “impossible.”[[18]](#footnote-18) This exact mission is later reflected in his *Negative* *Dialectics*. “The intention of saving metaphysics” writes Adorno to Scholem “is in fact the central one in the ‘Negative Dialectics.’”[[19]](#footnote-19) What clearly interests Adorno is to bring his discussion of critique to bear on contemporary social and political questions. Adorno, it seems, is drawn to the theological origins of metaphysic in the light of the educational implications of its possible end. The “civilizational break”, to cite Dan Diner, represented by “Auschwitz”, conditions for Adorno his quest after the theological roots of critique.[[20]](#footnote-20) In this sense, the reconstructing of a history of metaphysics from Antiquity to modernity (which is motivated, however, inversely by a look from modernity into Antiquity) is made in order to outline to the students what a “demand for a new beginning” may mean in present day Germany.[[21]](#footnote-21)

Adorno’s call for a “democratic pedagogy” may further illustrate this last point. The importance of this call lies in that it constitutes a central element in his public address on “critique.”[[22]](#footnote-22) Here, Adorno associates between a declining of critique (that is a “secular” resuming of theology) and the collapse of the Greek democracy. But the waning of critique that Adorno speaks of also explicitly and even more strongly relates to the collapse of modern democracy because it enabled the “delusional mania of nationalism”, that “possessed the nation.”[[23]](#footnote-23) Clearly, when thinking of such a “mania” Adorno has the modern German political experience in mind. Weimar, not Athens, is insinuated by him. Adorno’s pedagogic call for “democratic” education is thus mainly designed to bring about an awareness of and resistance to the modern social and political conditions, associated with a retreat from critique. Critique and resistance to the modern political settings are thus associated and it is because of the recent delusion of “nationalism” that for Adorno critique “is essential to all democracy.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Not surprisingly, then, Adorno teaches his students that metaphysics is “something fundamentally *modern.*”[[25]](#footnote-25) From such a perspective, the “working through the past” (*Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit*), a central educational theme for Adorno, receives a particular denotation. It refers not only to an acute pedagogic call to engage with recent historical events, but also and perhaps more profoundly to the need to understand the strong ties between critique, as an instrument of “rescuing” theology, and democracy.[[26]](#footnote-26)

The point to note is that the concept of critique acquires here an additional meaning. Critique does not only mean an ordering of concepts and it is also not only about the resumption of theology. It also mediates theology and what Adorno calls, in passing, “the world in which we exist.”[[27]](#footnote-27) Like in the case of Freud’s analysis of jokes, and Benjamin’s concept of youth, such a focus on “the world” refers to the social and political context to which we are subjugated and to which critique relates.

The manner in which critique corresponds in such a way to the liberation of human beings from the “enslaving” social mechanism of domination and control will be examined in the next section of this chapter. Here, however, I want first to underline the fact that our critical concepts that relate to the political sphere are clearly based on former theological ones. The idea that our political categories are “secularized theological concepts” constitutes the hub of Carl Schmitt’s notion of “political theology.”[[28]](#footnote-28) The claim seems to be also relevant to Adorno’s teachings which associate between critique as a “secularization” of theology and politics. Especially because of Adorno’s critical focus on “the world” we are dealing, then, with a political-theology of sorts. But the dissimilarity between Schmitt and Adorno is also noticeable. One of Adorno’s main dissociations from Schmitt’s theory lies in dismissing the strong emphasis on the power of the sovereign. Mitigated through critique, Adorno’s political-theology, points to resistance to political conditions, including those who are imposed by any form of authority and control. This point seems to me to be decisive in Adorno’s repudiation of Schmitt’s legal theory. The so called “political theological predicament” (a concept that relates to the diagnosis of the relation between politics and theology as much as to its reconstruction) is clearly also central to Adorno but acquires, it seems, a new guise.[[29]](#footnote-29) In Schmitt’s theory what defines the sovereign is the capacity to declare a “state of exception” (*Ausnahmezustand*) and this capacity to “decide” is made available because it remains analogous to the godly domain. In Adorno’s concept of critique, however, there is an opposite, perhaps, intentionally opposing political-theological image of resistance to the overwhelming power of the sovereign. As in Schmitt’s political-theology, political categories are formerly theological ones, but they do not indicate the “decisionism” of the potentate, but rather its negation. Christoph Schmidt for example pointed out that an emphasis on such a theological conceptualization of resistance to political circumstances uncovers its reliance on Biblical images of exodus and deliverance from “slavery.”[[30]](#footnote-30) It is, to follow Schmidt through, not the power of the sovereign, but rather the freedom from such power, that indicates what a “state of exception” may mean for Adorno.

b. A Critique of Theology

Is it not possible to argue that a critique of theology is put here on display? Like in Benjamin’s modern mysticism, and Freud’s recourse to the “law”, composed in the first decades of the twentieth century, a critique of theology denotes also in this case a concept of critique that is starkly dependent on theology. Critical thinking is not taught by Adorno as something that comes from the outside of theology, but as a reconceptualization of theological concepts. Arguably, then, with the “secular” emphasis of critique, theology lost neither its sway nor its centrality. As a form of analysis, a saving of theology, and a political category, critique emerges out of former theological concepts and is traced back by Adorno to them. A critique of theology is in this sense also a form of immanent critique because it points to a redeploying (rather than a dismissing) of theological constellations.

  Critique of theology indicates a dialectic composition of theology with its critical adversary and successor, in which the latter ensures the former by overriding it. This point seems to be important because it is in this particular sense that one may speak of how religious modes of critique power critique’s secular distancing from religion. The critical endeavor is designed to replace theology as a precondition of its maintenance and thus, theology is held only in terms of its critical surrogate that relates concurrently to conceptual thinking and to society and politics (i.e. “a world in which we live”). And vice versa: critique addresses these issues by being a secularization, and thus a translation, of theological concepts. The mission of rescuing theology that Adorno ascribes to metaphysics means such a critical-theological undertaking. And the question he poses as to the extent to which one may still hold to metaphysics in the postwar era, attests to his endeavor to salvage theology by means of a return to the teaching of critique. If anything, the postwar, social and political context to which Adorno relates, only emphasizes the need to reengage with what could be referred to as a critical-theological predicament – relating not only to the analysis of the relations between critique and theology but also to its reconstruction.

History provides Adorno with the central arena for such an analysis and reconstruction.[[31]](#footnote-31) We have seen for example how in his classroom lectures the relation of critique to theology is unfolded in the course of history from Antiquity to modernity. At stake for Adorno is a description of a historical process from “Aristotle’s theology” to the present reality over Christian cosmology, and Hegel’s philosophy.[[32]](#footnote-32) The centrality of Hegel’s philosophy to such an overarching, for Adorno “universal” (even if clearly Eurocentric), process will be discussed next. Here, I wish to point to the manner in which not only theology in general but Gnostic theology in particular marks a central aspect in Adorno’s classroom presentation of the historical unfolding of critical thinking.

Gnosis is the main theological issue to note because Adorno starts his historical overview with theological dualism. Dualism for Adorno originates in Aristotle’s clearly theological concept of “unmoved mover.” This concept marks a glaring opposition between Being and beings (i.e. the so called ontological difference). It thus pointed to Being as a “pure concept” of thought and as an “absolutely perfect entity” which is separated from all beings (or else it would not have been an “unmoved” and “perfect” origin of things). Such an idea was redolent of theology because it was not only about a “radical dualism of matter and form, the divine and the earthly, body and soul”, but also represented “the ancient precursor of the ontological proof of God.”[[33]](#footnote-33)

Christianity inherited from Aristotle’s metaphysics exactly this theological dualism in which Being “resists identity” with beings. “Resistance” means an innate non-identity between form and matter, god and world.[[34]](#footnote-34) Thus:

“What you have here is, fundamentally, the later problem of Christian theology: why the world created by God is not a divine world, why it is not already perfect. This, too, is answered in accordance with the same dualistic principle, which states that creation opposes, or in some way resists, pure identity with the creator.”[[35]](#footnote-35)

By means of its emphasis on dualism, Aristotle’s secularization of theology (i.e. his critical thinking) informs, perhaps ironically, Christian theology. But the point that Adorno makes here is that Christianity is consumed by the unequivocal opposition between a benevolent god and its counterpart, evil world. Christianity it seems does not fully dismiss its secular, critical, forerunner the same way Aristotle’s metaphysics did not fully dismiss its own theological precursor. It thus continues to engage with a theological problem that is dominant in the construction of critical thinking.

But why to associate such dualism with Gnosticism? The reference to gnosis, I suggest, is pertinent not only because it was relevant for example to Benjamin (as described in chapter 2), but especially in the light of the rise of interest in gnostic theology in the German intellectual discussions in the 1950s and 1960s.[[36]](#footnote-36) In these discussions Gnostic theology stands for a radical distinction (i.e. dualism) between a completely transcendent (other, alienated, true) god and the world.[[37]](#footnote-37) It encloses in such a way the hidden character of the true “absolutely other” god, who is conceptualized as removed from a world governed by other forces. Gnosis, to put it bluntly, is the theology of dualism.

This dualistic theology was then addressed in the writings of scholars like Hans Blumenberg, Eric Voegelin, Jacob Taubes, Ernst Bloch, Hans Jonas and Gerschom Scholem in the decades following the world war (the last two were continuing their interest in gnosis from the 1920s and 1930s). In a variety, at times contradicting, ways these scholars integrated gnosis into their different historical descriptions and, not less important, social and political imaginaries. This array of references was directed less at questions relating to the existence of a dualistic or Manichean faith in antiquity (e.g. what constitute such faith? Who were its agents? When and where it proliferated?). It focused rather on its symbolic significance for an analysis of modern society and politics.

Voegelin’s “revolt against modernity”, for example, reposed on his identifying between gnostic heresy and all modern social and political ideologies.[[38]](#footnote-38) For Voegelin the common denominator of all modern political phenomena – without differentiating for example between liberalism and communism – lies in their being gnostic. His critique of modernity relied on this supposition which pointed not only to a connection between gnostic theology and modernity but more profoundly pointed to an identity between them. At the same time Hans Jonas critically reconsidered his own early enthusiasm for gnosis from the 1920s and connected it with Heidegger’s philosophy.[[39]](#footnote-39) In a rather convoluted way Jonas wished to point to the gnostic characteristic of his former mentor’s existentialism, that makes it even more susceptive to “the absolute pit” of nihilism than its theological portent.[[40]](#footnote-40) Unlike Gnosticism who classifies the world as evil, Heidegger’s existentialism goes even further and empties the world of any meaning (neither god nor evil). To overcome Gnosticism means for Jonas to combat against such nihilistic existential theology and to do so by rethinking the relations between God and world. In the 1960s Hans Blumenber’s *Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, picked up these different engagements with gnosis. Underlining, however, modernity as a successful attempt to “overcome” gnosis, Blumenberg presents an explicit retort to Voegelin’s association between modernity and gnostic theology.[[41]](#footnote-41) For Blumenberg gnostic theology appears and reappears in the course of history as an upshot of failed attempts to explain the endurance of evil. One falls back on dualism when all other possible theological explanations to the coexistence of evil and god are rendered invalid. It is this theological inheritance, however, from which modernity breaks loose by introducing “the immanent self-assertion of reason through the mastery and alteration of reality.”[[42]](#footnote-42) For such a human “self-assertion” any imagined dichotomy between world and god is meaningless. Marking for Blumenberg an overcoming of gnostic dualism, modernity is in such a way not only “defended” but also to some extent celebrated because it presents a final, perhaps redemptive, liberation from all former theologies of redemption.

Similar considerations that intertwine overarching reflections on Gnosticism, the course of history and the meaning of modernity are visible in Ernst Bloch’s utopian imagination (which he associated with “revolutionary gnosis”), Jacob Taubes’ critique of modern political-theology and Gershom Scholem’s writings on Jewish modernity from the 1960s.[[43]](#footnote-43) Scholem’s scholarship makes a particular case in point because the concept of gnosis was central to his ongoing studies of Jewish messianism and in particular Sebastianism. Already in his celebrated “Redemption through Sin” from 1937 for example he underlines the strong association between the Sabbatical heresy and gnostic theology.[[44]](#footnote-44) This association was then central to Scholem’s ongoing studies of Jewish mysticism which always incorporated a reference to a dualist theological speculation that necessarily accompanies the mystical notion of an “alien”, not of this world, god.

Adorno was, no doubt, familiar with this wide scholarly context, elaborated in briefly above. Thus, for example, in one of his early letters to Scholem, he confessed his interest in what ties together gnosis, Jewish mysticism and the modern works of Kierkegaard, Benjamin and Kafka.[[45]](#footnote-45) His critique of theology, and especially in its reposing on the history of dualism, may thus be suggested as his own way into the discussion. In Adorno’s critique of theology, the historical process is described in terms of the separation between god and world that works its way from its Greek theological and metaphysical origins over Christian theology and into modernity. Such a dualistic worldview represents in particular the “problem” that was transmuted from Christianity into modern forms of critical investigation. Put differently, the history of critique in its reposing on theology, is marked mainly by the relation between critique and gnosis. Especially modernity inherited the ontological dualism from Christianity and, not a far cry from Blumenberg’s thesis, is characterized according to Adorno by the endeavors to overcome this gnostic inheritance.

These endeavors, for Adorno, culminate in Hegel’s idea of progress (*Fortschritt*). We are returning here to the centrality of Hegel’s philosophy in Adorno’s lectures. For Adorno, Hegel’s idea of progress marks an attempt to overcome gnostic dualism because it points to a world historical process which ends in “oneness”, identity, or unity (*Einheit*), of the divine spirit with the world. This unity between god and world, denies a stark separation between the two, and is achieved by the progressive process of systematic negations, and the negations of the negations whose summative result is an identity of all negations in a positive final, one may say all too final, redemptive confirmation.[[46]](#footnote-46)

To some extent what is represented here by Adorno is a philosophical reconceptualization of the Christian theological struggle against Judaism, central to Hegel’s *The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate*.[[47]](#footnote-47) Hegel’s “progress” is in such a way considered an upshot of his understanding of Christian eschatology.[[48]](#footnote-48) Here Adorno seems to simply reiterate Karl Loewith’s thesis that all modern categories – and specifically Hegel’s philosophy – are reformulations, and thus secularization, of the Christian eschatological notions, albeit Adorno is not highly sedulous in disclosing this source.[[49]](#footnote-49) Modernity for Adorno “is still linked to redemption by Christ, as the historically successful redemption.” The theological concept of redemption, however, is translated into “an immanent teleology and the conception of humanity as the subject of all progress.” Hegel’s progress then means that the advent of the divine spirit is achieved in the world and as a worldly process and it culminates in a final identity or else redemptive oneness of this spirit with the world.[[50]](#footnote-50) Because of the unity between God and world, metaphysics goes “into material existence” which means that it offers a critique in which the essence of Being is not separated from beings, but rather absorbed into their worldly existence.[[51]](#footnote-51)

In Hegel’s dialectics, one may argue, the problem of gnostic dualism is resolved because unity (or identity) elevates the gnostic conflicts (i.e. non-identity between god/world, matter/form, object/thought) to higher “positive” unity of all conflicts within this worldliness. But the final unity of matter and spirit, world and god, history and eternity, cosmology and soteriology, presents not only a modern solution to old theological problems. It also stands for a new and for Adorno far more precarious predicament: if transcendence is transformed to indicate an immanent, world historical process, this process “receives the aura of redemption even though redemption failed to occur and evil persisted unabated.”[[52]](#footnote-52) The problem that Adorno identifies rests with the fact that in the modern Hegelian critique “Christian soteriology – in other words, the science of salvation, the doctrine of salvation” is “completely absorbed into the *civitas terrena,* its Augustinian counterpart.”[[53]](#footnote-53)

Already in his *Minima Moralia* Adorno clearly points out that such an associating between soteriology and cosmology means no more than to “justify the diabolical positive, naked interest.”[[54]](#footnote-54) What makes such a process “diabolic” is the replacing of dualism in oneness, and in so doing holding to a “religious authoritarian pathos without the least religious content.”[[55]](#footnote-55) The theme reappears then as an educational content. Much like Aristotle’s metaphysics, Hegel’s dialectics is endowed with a secular shift from the godly to the worldly in a way that also preserves the original theological connotations. In both cases, a theological argument is refuted, and held concurrently by critique – a structure that attest to the continuing presence of theology at the heart of all critical endeavors. Adorno then concludes that dialectics takes in such a way over metaphysics:

“One of the mystical impulses secularized in [Hegel’s] dialectics was the doctrine that the intermundane and historic is relevant to what traditional metaphysics distinguished as transcendence – or at least, less gnostically and radically put, that it is relevant to the position taken by human consciousness on the questions which the canon of philosophy assigned to metaphysics.”[[56]](#footnote-56)

What the canon of philosophy “assigned to metaphysics” was the original theological argumentation concerning a transcendent Being, absorbed, in Hegel’s secular scheme, into the “universal” historical process. The effect of this process of secularization, however, lies in a diluting of transcendence. There is then also a difference between modern and ancient critiques, as a result. Only the modern one identifies Being with beings, history with salvation, and critique with an adaptation to existing conditions. Critique, arguably, becomes enslaved to the existing social and historical circumstances. Not only that modern critical thinking does not rise up to its calling to “rescue” theology, but rather more profoundly it attenuates it by representing a worldly and immanent process as if it is divine and transcendent.

In such a way Hegel’s dialectic ends not with the “freedom” of subjectivity but rather with its absolute enslavement to a new form of total domination and control.[[57]](#footnote-57) Under such new circumstances, historical events:

“work themselves out at the expense of human beings, human beings are their victims, history stretches its hand out over all human beings.”[[58]](#footnote-58)

What Adorno then describes is the total “entrapment” of the human being.[[59]](#footnote-59) Representing a human complete “adaptation” to reality with no possibility to escape, entrapment is a result of a mechanism of total domination and control, that Hegel’s theology of “unity” stands for.[[60]](#footnote-60) This conclusion brings Hegel perhaps closer to Spinoza’s pantheistic identification of natural necessity with god and the consequent exclusion of transcendence. But the point that Adorno seems to make is that “entrapment” is still pregnant with the culmination of progress in “oneness”, “identity”, and “unity” that was the hub of all eschatological anticipations. It does so, however, in being merely material process (i.e. social and historical) with no reference to any divine or transcendent sphere outside its dominion. In the same vein, history still maintains the ideal of unanimity of thought and matter, subjectivity and external conditions, freedom and law that characterized the continuing relations between critique and theology. These, however, become devoid of any notion of the eternal, transcendent and divine, at least in the sense that the historical operation encloses its inner rationale in itself and for itself. It becomes a *modus ponens* of sorts – a process that affirms itself by its own mechanism at work. One may then argue that Adorno’s critique of theology puts here an image of an all-consuming mechanism on display in which deliverance is reformed as a bare technical reason of a worldly apparatus.

**II.****Entrapment and Education**

a. From *Bildung* to *Halbbildugn*

The “entrapment” of critique, following its diluting of theology, is especially visible in the context of modern education.[[61]](#footnote-61) The fact that the cultivation of human beings provides a central arena for thinking of the theological roots of critique, and of their modern implications is put on displayed in particular in Adorno’s extensive essay *Theorie der Halbbildung,* which (given the rich meaning of the term *Bildung*) may be translated as a Theory of Pseudo-Culture and as a Theory of Pseudo-Education.[[62]](#footnote-62) The paper’s reference to education seems to be obvious since *Bildung* represents for Adorno the educational ideal of the enlightenment, denoting a self-formation of an individual who practices universal rationality and makes autonomous decisions.[[63]](#footnote-63) In the era of the enlightenment, the developing of such a critical individual, is accomplished by means of “self-formation” (*Bildung*) of the individual’s inner capacities to a “complete and consistent whole.”[[64]](#footnote-64) Especially under Humboldt’s dominant articulation, self-formation indicates an inner progression of free individuals towards a better understanding, fulfillment, and growth, of themselves, and as Bauer rightly argued, it was thought as a characteristic of a human being that may eschew any direct social control.[[65]](#footnote-65) Critical thinking is thus entwined with freedom from social circumstances because the cultivation of the “self” should not yield to external guidance but rather directed “by each individual of himself and his own free will, according to the measures of his wants and instincts, and restricted only by the limits of his powers and his rights.”[[66]](#footnote-66)

This rather traditional view of *Bildung* was a generational truism. Steven Aschheim for example pointed out that not only a positive take on *Bildung* represented for twentieth century German intellectuals adherence to the tradition of the enlightenment but also the opposite reproach of this education ideal signified the “abandoning” of the enlightened rational, universalist ideals.[[67]](#footnote-67) This is also true of Adorno. For him, *Bildung* denoted what Fritz Ringer called the “ideological position” of the German “*Bildungsbürgertum”*– endowing their emerging liberal ethics, and idea of “progress” with its foundation.[[68]](#footnote-68) In such a way *Bildung* refers to education, to culture and to an ideology at the center of which lies an idea of progress, absorbed into the development of each individual. As an educational ideal it represented also the cornerstone of class identity“of the educated middle classes under the circumstances of political impotence”, connecting in this way the ideals of the enlightenment, liberal ethics with concrete social and political aims.[[69]](#footnote-69)

It is, however, the particular theological aspects that Benjamin ascribed to *Bildung* that are further developed by Adorno. Theology is here central because for Adorno self-formation secularizes the concept ofthe godlikeness of man (*imago-dei)* found in Christian theology.[[70]](#footnote-70) This notion of secularization is decisive. It underlines the manner in which education for Adorno epitomizes the history of critique discussed above. Arguably, we are presented with a central arena in which theological ideas are translated into rational categories of critique – replacing, in in so doing rescuing these ideas. Aiming at the refinement of a rational, autonomous individual, *Bildung* entails the overall idea of progress by means of self fulfilment, designating self-perfection.[[71]](#footnote-71) This overall mission of progress towards the “good life” carries with it a secularized version of human creation in the image of god, with all its redemptive overtones. These overtones are connected to what Gotthold Ephraim Lessing labeled “revelation coming to the individual man”, which for Adorno marked a clear case for the centrality of theological notions invested in the formation of an ideal type of a rational, autonomous, critical human being.[[72]](#footnote-72) In such a way, the secularization of revelation entailed in the concept of *Bildung* offers a reconceptualization of theological concepts.

Yet, if human cultivation provides Adorno with the arena for the unfolding of the relation of critique to theology, it also stands for the locus of its entrapment, when *Bildung* was transformed into “a socialized pseudo-education (*Halbbildung*), the ubiquity of the alienated spirit.”[[73]](#footnote-73) For Adorno such a transformation of an educational ideal means “regression” (*Rückbildung*), a term that indicates a transformation of self-formation that was designed to critically resist social dominance, with one that is absorbed by such a control. What enables regression is the “spiritualization” (“*Vegeistlichung*”) of self-formation.[[74]](#footnote-74) As in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* the spiritualization that Adorno evokes does not refer to the making of a concrete substance more abstract or removed from the world, but rather to the loss of the original theological horizon of critique.[[75]](#footnote-75) Following such a process, the social and political reality – “the world in which we exist” – absorbs the theological hopes for redemption invested in human self-formation. In this way “the dream of associating critique with freedom from the dictate of means (*Mittel*), from obdurate and sterile utility, is falsified into an apology for the world guided by the same dictate.”[[76]](#footnote-76) An entrapping education, somewhat cunningly, replaces an original theological mission by means of its falsification.

This last point seems to be crucial. An unctuous pseudo-education (*Halbbildung*) represents for Adorno an emblem for the “entrapment” that was central to his discussion of the relations between critique and theology in his lectures. What was imagined as a site of “freedom” and “autonomy”, because it was still saturated in theology (even if by working against it), is in such a way distorted, representing now a call for adaptation to social structures and heteronomy.[[77]](#footnote-77)

The prefix “pseudo” points to such a distortion and corresponds to an educational surrender to what Horkheimer categorized as “enslaving circumstances.”[[78]](#footnote-78) The image that was relevant for example to Benjamin’s social critique, reappears in Adorno’s reflections on education. This means that pseudo-education does not only refer to the reduction of education to mere practical and for Adorno narrow, knowledge, although this is certainly part of its characteristics. Rather it refers to a replacing of education with a devious doppelganger (i.e. pseudo-education) which does not imply that people are uneducated but that they “hypostatize limited knowledge as truth” and limited schooling as if it is personal growth.[[79]](#footnote-79) Deceitful education does not leave people uncultivated in any simple sense, but rather entraps them in a mendacious reality.

In the spirit of our days one may call this, perhaps, fake-education. A fake-educational ideal stands for a type of cultivation that reduces humans into controllable things. Bearing this particular argument in mind, Adorno’s assertion that “pseudo-education made the secret kingdom into an everything” means more than just the making of some hidden truths “available to all.”[[80]](#footnote-80) It implies (with Benjamin’s “Kingdom of God” in mind) the absorbing of a theological imagination referring to the godly, clandestine, “kingdom”, by its opposite reified, worldly, fully material, and for Adorno technological, polity. Material reality substitutes the divine, and practical knowledge presents itself as if it is critical reflection. The crux of the matter lies not in replacing one ideal of critical education with a different one. Rather it is more accurately about the corruption of a critical-theological educational mission that is turned into its opposite because of mechanisms that were already embedded within this mission.

We may understand in this light some of Adorno’s prevalent concepts such as “reified consciousness” and “coldness.” Especially in his addresses on education, reified consciousness – a concept that Adorno adopts from Lukacs – characterizes for Adorno a person who is fully absorbed into the existing conditions.[[81]](#footnote-81) As Brian O’Conner noted well “by reification Adorno means the perception of what is qualitative as quantitative.”[[82]](#footnote-82) It is where the human being is reduced to an entity “with certain socially useful capacities.” This is also where there is no “sphere of life” that is independent of “the requirements of society.”[[83]](#footnote-83) “Coldness”, in the same spirit, encompass an aspect of reification because a person who is absorbed by “what happens to be the case” is also indifferent to others, or else “cold.”[[84]](#footnote-84) In both cases, however, the argument that Adorno wishes to make is not exhausted by the pointing to human submission. It refers more profoundly to the effect of fake-education. We are dealing then with different upshots of the transformation of a theological imagination into its opposite and the consequent rendering of the original mission of a critique (a mission anchored in theology) hollow.

Less prevalent, but perhaps not less significant, is Adorno’s reference to a “short-circuit in permanence” (“*Kurzschluß in Permanenz*”).[[85]](#footnote-85) This unique image captures for Adorno the transformation of a critical-theological ideal of *Bildung* to its replicon which is characterized by a total submission to worldly conditions. In chapter one, we have seen how Freud used the concept of “short-circuit” to indicate a complicated relation between the law (broadly understood) and its forms of transgression in which a law that turns against itself, enables its own persistence. Falsifications, in particular, were for Freud mechanism that supported such a double play of a law that “returns upon itself.” Adorno seems to work along similar lines of argumentation because he takes a concept of a “short-circuit” to signify the manner in which in pseudo-education the divine is transformed and thus turned against itself. But, a clear difference between the two approaches is also noticeable. In Freud’s theory of jokes, short-circuits stand for antinomies that enable, nonetheless, the persistence of “the law in which we live” and which Freud therefore endorses. For Adorno, conversely, such a law seems to lose its immediate positive connotation. It represents a complete subordination to a “world in which we exist”, which denotes a clear, and one may say, final distortion of its theological origins. This end result is not addressed by Adorno in terms of the victory of untamed impulses, non-rational desires or suppressed wishes, that Freud’s jokes indicates, but rather in terms of the opposite triumph of the rational means of operation over such impulses. One could say that the law at stake is now rethought and redefined as an industrial, arguably technological, logic, with no possibility of transgression. Such a conclusion may demonstrate not that antinomian moments of defiance and relief win the day, but rather, conversely, that they are fully lost.

b. Moloch

I would like to zoom in at this point and however briefly, on the entanglement of entrapment, reification and technology that Adorno’s discussion of education brings to the fore. It seems rather clear that Adorno’s critique of theology leads to the bringing together of these notions and it is valuable to unpack some of their central implications for education. Even if this rich symbolism was addressed in Adorno’s lectures and written compositions in the 1960s, I find the Weimarian image of a “Moloch” – depicted so melodramatically for example in Thea von Harbou’s and Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis* – a fruitful way to encapsulate rather elegantly the association of this array of different notions and of their theological connotation.[[86]](#footnote-86) The “strength of an image”, if to evoke Adorno’s own conceptualization, can capture the philosopher’s pedagogic constellations.[[87]](#footnote-87)

The term “Moloch” refers to the biblical Canaanite god, associated with human, especially child, sacrifice. In the German intellectual milieu of the late 19th and early 20th century, the terms “Moloch” and “molochitisch” were then typically used as allegories of destruction and annihilation. For members of the “George Circle” for example they signified the main characteristics of a repressive modern culture that is the “sworn enemy” of life. Ludwig Klages’ blatant anti-Semitism presented a particular case for such a view, because it associated between this metaphysical foe of life and the Jewish god of creation.[[88]](#footnote-88)

To the viewers of *Metropolis,* however, Moloch was developed to represent a modern all-embracing machine-god that demands human sacrifice; a human-made principle of reality that consumes the human being and that is associated with the framework of modern society and of its cruel demands. When the protagonist of the film, Freder Fredersen, cries “Moloch” he envisions, for a brief, elusive moment, such a machine-god as the essence of an industrial society whose fruits he was born to rather insouciantly enjoy on the brutal expense of others. Moloch, to put it bluntly, controls all aspects of life by their very consumption. There is then a clear association between technology and theology, at the center of which lies a human-made enemy of the humane: an idol of self-sacrifice.

This image seems to resonate rather well with the interweaving of entrapment, reification and technology that Adorno’s critique of theology puts on display. This is not to argue that Adorno had seen *Metropolis* or that he had been influenced by it. But at the heart of Adorno’s symbolism lies, it seems, an analogous dramatic association between theology and technology that the image of Moloch encapsulates: An association between a divine and an all-embracing worldly mechanism at work with its own sacrificial logic and rationale, of which human beings are but victims. This is, arguably, what Adorno means when pointing to the transformation of transcendence into an immanent universal and mechanical consuming reality with no possibility of escaping its domination and control. This much, even if Adorno has in mind predominantly the secularization of Christian theology rather than a notion of a pagan deity.

The association between a theological argument and a mechanical imagery marks here one of the main points to note. What entraps critique is specifically a mechanism of worldly domination that enslaves humanity to its sacrificial logic. Freud’s civilizational “discontents” in which “civilization itself produces anti-civilization and increasingly reinforces it” may come here to mind.[[89]](#footnote-89) But for Adorno this “discontent” mainly means a sadistic “pleasure machine” and, thus, a form of “torture” in which any resistance to the “adaptation of people to collectives” is futile.[[90]](#footnote-90) Gerschom Scholem’s critical remark that Adorno’s concept of history acts as a “deus ex machine” seems to present the case rather fittingly. In Adorno’s postwar thought Scholem finds a, for him, Hegelian notion of an organizing “totality” that binds everything to its logic, albeit such a mechanism at work does not resolve the tragic plot but rather embodies it.[[91]](#footnote-91)

Is it possible to argue that Adorno reflects on Kant’s statement that the human being is “more than a machine” (*mehr als eine Machine*)?[[92]](#footnote-92) Kant’s, somewhat hopeful, avowal closes his famous “Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment”, central to which was the notion of a human “release” (*Ausgang*) from self-imposed tutelage. In this closing passage, Kant seems to think that not only human freedom, but also human “dignity” depends on the separation between human and machine. Critique is a central element of this imagery because it represents the main capacity of the human being as rational autonomous and self-dependent free agent. From this point of view, the problem that Adorno presents for education may be seen as relating to the fact that such a separation was lost. Especially because of its entrapment in the totality of history, the humanity of humans becomes enslaved to a mechanism at work. The human being is thus not “more than a machine” but is rather adapted to its modes of operation.

In a wide range of articulations from that time, Adorno seems to accentuate this particular educational imagery. His celebrated “Culture of Industry” is one of the more discussed cases. The notion of an industry makes here, visibly, the main topic. This notion relates to the “standardization” of the objects themselves and to the “rationalization of distribution techniques.”[[93]](#footnote-93) These two categories (standardization and rationalization) effect individuals to their innermost core. They do so for example even to the extent that “imagination is replaced by a mechanically relentless control mechanism which determines whether the latest imago to be distributed really represents an exact, accurate and reliable reflection of the relevant item of reality.”[[94]](#footnote-94) And thus:

“The massive concentration of economic powers, and consequently of political and administrative ones as well, to a large extent reduces every individual into a mere functionary of the machinery.”[[95]](#footnote-95)

Humans become “an appendage of the machinery” representing merely “an object of calculation.”[[96]](#footnote-96) Here, mechanization represents a central image for Adorno, one that encapsulates the human modern condition. Such mechanization is not just about mass production of factories, though such a notion seems to be part of Adorno’s social imagination. More profoundly, in referring to notions such as sameness, and reproduction, mechanization represents an emblem for dehumanization. As in the Weimarian image of Moloch, the “technological rationality…makes souls into things”, and it is exactly this theologically imbued notion that Adorno develops further in his concept of mechanized, technological, totality.[[97]](#footnote-97) One could say that, perhaps in stark opposition to Heidegger, there are not traces of ‘techne’ (craftsmanship, skill, art) in Adorno’s concept of technology.[[98]](#footnote-98) On the contrary. Modern technology is devoid of such qualities. It is thus not about a “revelation” of Being, as Heidegger would argue, but of the “demonic” termination of the human being.

Adorno clearly has Auschwitz in mind. We are returning here to the main concern of education devoted to the call for “no more Auschwitz.” An emblem for annihilation, Auschwitz is a product of a critique that distorts theology. Secularization and annihilation are in such a way connected under an evocative image of “barbarism” that Adorno evokes (parallel and in contrast to Hannah Arendt who will be discussed in the next chapter) in many of his lectures and oral presentations on education. With a reference to “barbarism” Adorno aims at presenting his audience with the absolute bottomless pit of extermination. As Terrence Holden rightly pointed out, however, Adorno takes such a notion to represent more profoundly the absolute evil of theology.[[99]](#footnote-99) As a form of evil, barbarism reflects the full extent of absorbing transcendence within immanence, making the first (transcendence) void and the second (immanence) malicious. Barbarism is characterized then not by being impulsive, or irrational, or by a refusal to comply with the norms of correct or acceptable behavior. It is, rather, described as being consumed by an all-embracing “machine”, or else as a full capitalization to the mechanism of social rule, cultural habits, and political coercion. It is where human beings are “one with domination” – with special emphasis, though, on the theological connotation of “oneness” and “dominion” – a catastrophic play on an imaginary end-result of the Christian promise of redemption through sameness, oneness, and identification with Christ.[[100]](#footnote-100)

These theological associations do not relate only to the horrifying systematic murdering of Jews, although this was certainly central to Adorno, whose Jewish origins may have assured him with such a fate, had he not had escaped Germany.[[101]](#footnote-101) More universally, they represent a full withdrawal of society and culture from humane considerations, culminating in the *Endlösung* – which Adorno sees as the complete loss of humanity.[[102]](#footnote-102) Here, a control mechanism denotes the extinction of humanity by reducing the human being to represent nothing more than a part of a machine – an image which unwavering influence later stretched from the speculations of nomadic philosophy to the Star-Trek science fiction that brought us the ominous collective “Borg.”

**III. Critical Self Reflection**

a. Sabotage

Against the critical-theological image of entrapment in a sadistic “pleasure machine” Adorno endeavors to throw “wrenches into the machinery.”[[103]](#footnote-103) One could fairly say: an act of sabotage. In the field of education, the notion of sabotage seems to be important because it points to the acute need to rethink cultivation in a way that saves the human beings from the machine. If the consumption of a human being by a mechanism of total control was the image that represented the end-result of a critique that diluted its theological sources, sabotage may denote the opposite saving of the human being from such a fate. To put it more metaphorically, it is about an education ex-machina. By using this metaphor, the aim is not to appeal to a supernatural dramatic appearance of god by means of the machine (a *deus ex-machine* as Scholem for example suggested) but to the not less theatrical allure of saving human beings from the Ananke of entrapment. Thus, to the extent that education represents for Adorno an arena for demonstrating how human beings became an “appendix” of the machinery (as for example in the case of *Halbildung*) it also serves as the showground for sabotaging the instruments of control, with all its critical and theological overtones.

“Critical self-reflection” is the main educational concepts reflecting this aim. I suggest this point because in many of his lectures Adorno pits an educational for “critical self-reflection” and “reified consciousness” – the latter characterizes, as noted above, people who are “an appendage of the machinery” – against each other.[[104]](#footnote-104) But critique indicates sabotage in a distinctive way: It reflects the recovery of the critical endeavor to “save” theology (even if by turning away from it), against the background of the impossibility of recreating the educational tradition of self-formation, devoted to this mission. In the notion of “critical self-reflection”, arguably, Adorno presents a reconceptualization of the educational concept of critique that was rendered invalid.

The point to note relates to Adorno’s double reference to the original mission of critique. On the one hand a “critical self-reflection” still resonates with the hope that the human being is “more than a machine” and in such a way echoes the “Kantian idea of the humanity in our person.”[[105]](#footnote-105) On the other hand it takes into consideration the conversion of *Bildung* into *Halbbildung* which renders this original ideal inaccessible to any further extent. The question that Adorno seems then to underline for an education ex-machina is whether and in what way it is possible to reengage with the mission of critique, in the wake of the impossibility to do so.

One may consider Adorno’s celebrated notion of negativity in this educational light. Paul Mendes-Flohr pointed out how negativity, perhaps the concept that is associated with Adorno’s postwar thought the most, is a theological concept that appeals to “an entire other”, and as such it means resistance to identity (the type of unity of god and world that Adorno ascribes for example to the source of fake-education) and the presenting of “non-identity” in its stead.[[106]](#footnote-106) In the educational arena, however, such a notion may suggest something further still. In signifying a retreat of critique from any belief in a final positive unity, goal or end for human self-formation, negativity also presents the only viable way to still hold to these ideals. Put differently, it is about reengaging with the mission of critique, against the background of its disappearance. This is, then, what negativity stands for: the only possible way for holding to an unholdable object.

This last point seems to be crucial. Peter Gordon recently suggested that in Adorno’s postwar “dialectic of secularization” we see a clear “migration in the profane“ (*Einwanderung ins Profane*) in which “all metaphysical authority” is evacuated.[[107]](#footnote-107) In his reflections on education, however, we see a, perhaps more nuanced, approach to such a migration in which a turn against metaphysical authority is made in order not to lose sight of such an authority. It is then evidently true that because of the transformation from the ideal of *Bildung* to its fake-educational doppelganger one must scour any naïve faith in the redemptive hopes that are invested in an enlightened perfect “personality” (*Persönlichkeit*) in which self-formationwas supposed to culminate. Particularly “the concept of personality”, Adorno argues, “cannot be saved.”[[108]](#footnote-108) Nonetheless, in evoking the need for critical self-reflection these ideals are not forsaken. On the contrary. Adorno’s effort is designed to reengage with their critical calling. This reengagement, however, is possible only on the expense of dismissing the actual (but not the potential) realization of the original theological mission of critique.[[109]](#footnote-109) To put it differently, critique’s theological promise can be realized only by not being realized.

This point is developed for example in Adorno’s reflections on the educational role of philosophy. Constituting a central element in many of his of oral lectures (e.g. “Philosophy and Teachers”, “Why Still Philosophy” and “Notes on Philosophical Thinking”), philosophy attests to the holding to the theological mission of critique that cannot be held anymore. Thus, on the one hand, the role of philosophy is to resist the human consumption “by the machinery” by still holding to critical thinking.[[110]](#footnote-110) Offering such a resistance renders “a force that opposes the narrow minded acquisition of factual knowledge, even in the so-called philosophical specialties.”[[111]](#footnote-111) For “specialists” (Heidegger’s existentialism and logical positivism represent for Adorno clear examples) thinking is contracted to disclosing “pre-given data.” In still avowing the original role of critique, however, philosophy, works “against the justification of what happens to be the case.”[[112]](#footnote-112)

On the other hand, however, “philosophy is no longer applicable to the technique of mastering one’s life.”[[113]](#footnote-113) Especially here philosophy withdraws from the original mission of the critical quest of metaphysics which it cannot guaranty any longer. Philosophy can thus appear in the field of pedagogy only: “as critique, as resistance to the expanding heteronomy” and as a “powerless attempt” not to offer truth but to expose “untruth.”[[114]](#footnote-114) In such a way philosophical education holds to a tradition – in this case that of critical inquiry – only by disavowing its positive aims. The duality – holding to a critical tradition by its rejection – points is such a way to:

The only responsible philosophy is one that no longer imagines it had the Absolute at its command; indeed, philosophy must forbid the thought of it in order not to betray that thought, and at the same time it must not bargain away anything of the emphatic concept of truth. This contradiction is philosophy’s element. It defines philosophy as negative.[[115]](#footnote-115)

Forbidding the mission of philosophy in order, however, “not to betray” it, seems to be here the main issue to note. Defining philosophy as negative means such a dialectic move away from a theological conviction (i.e. the belief in holding the “Absolut” at our command) in order, however, to save it. The association of such a notion of negativity with the so called negative theology and “*Bilderverbot”* (the biblical prohibition of making images) will be presented in the last section of this chapter. Here, the point to note relates to the manner in which Adorno underlines the holding to an unholdable theology – not “betraying” the theological endeavor that must be at the same time considered lost. Critique’s theological promise can be thus realized only by not being realized exactly because philosophy does not “bargain away” its conceptual commitments by means of their dismissal.

Many of Adorno’s educational concepts point in the same direction. Thus for example, Adorno’s “return to the subject”, or else “a turn toward the subject” accentuates an educational belief in the success of the project of humanism while dismissing its underlining positive aspirations (i.e. those that relate to its material realization) altogether.[[116]](#footnote-116) This is also true of the “individual element” that education needs to nurture. It still attests to the “enduring persistence of particularity” without however pointing to its realization through the perfection of the human being.[[117]](#footnote-117) The same can be said in referring to “universal history” that for Adorno “must be construed and denied.”[[118]](#footnote-118) There is a critical act at stake in which the only way to “construe” a lost object is to deny any positive ability to do so.

What is denied in Adorno’s educational appeal for “critical self-reflection” is not the theological horizon of critique but rather the belief in a progressive advancement towards the realization of its redemptive mission. Again, we should bear in mind a critique that entails a reconceptualization of theological concepts, indicating a critical adversary and successor of theology that ensures it by overriding it. A critical retreat from redemption to reflection makes a good case for such a compound combination. The redemptive mission is about perfection; the new negative educational mission is about a retreat to the “refuge” of reflection.[[119]](#footnote-119) Reflection rather than perfection means a human self-formation which does not correspond to an advancing, or progressing towards a final redemptive end in any positive sense. But it is also not about losing sight of that theological aspect, but rather about holding to that which always remain the source of critique and of its ability to offer resistance to “enslavement.”

The idiom of holding to an unholdable object seems then to capture such a “negative” approach to critical self-reflection rather well. It encapsulates the extent to which Adorno distances himself from the “final” unity of god and world, in order however not to lose sight of its theological underpinning. “Destroying immediacy” signifies in such a way the sabotaging of the modern (and for Adorno mainly Hegelian) tying between the advance of history and the advent of redemption.[[120]](#footnote-120) Indeed, it is not about resisting the theological image of a perfect, redeemed “utopia” but rather about a type of resistance that “sabotages its realization.”[[121]](#footnote-121)

Can we speak in such a case of an orchestrated return to gnosis? We have seen above how the unity that Adorno seems to work against, represented for him a failed attempt to overcome gnosis. The focus on non-identity may be thus regarded as a reengagement with the traditional differentiation between god and world corresponding to a fall back on theological dualism. The point seems to be weighty also in the light of Hegel’s clear dissociation between Christianity and Judaism, in which the first represented the dialectic integration (and for Hegel this also means a redemptive reconciliation) of god and world, and the second the stark, vehement, separation between the two.[[122]](#footnote-122)

Nonetheless, when we note that dismissing unity, sameness, and identification is made in order to save them, we must also acknowledge an implicit resistance to stark dualism. On the one hand, a notion of a totally alien “other” (as Mendes-Flohr for example put it) is indeed redeployed by Adorno in order to eschew its unity with the world. On the other hand, and concomitantly, such a dual approach, is not meant to dismiss the relation of god to the world, and thus to re-separate them. Rather it is made in order to point to the only, negative, way that remains available to hold to such a relation. Resisting the patent separation between the “Absolute” and the world, is made by means of the concurrent holding to it, presenting, perhaps what a reconceptualization of gnostic conceptions may mean for Adorno.

b. A Love Supreme

Love represents another important, perhaps surprising, feature of a critical self-reflection that holds to an unholdable theological mission. A close examination of love seems to be fitting because Adorno repeatedly, albeit far from systematically, associates of love and critique in his addresses on education.[[123]](#footnote-123) In his university course on metaphysics for example he differentiates between the type of love that needs to be directed “towards evil”, and the “unqualified love” which is an “uncritical” attitude “in the face of what is.”[[124]](#footnote-124) Earlier in his radio address “Philosophy and Teachers” Adorno connects, albeit somewhat loosely, between love and “the ability to engage with intellectual matters” and between the lack of love and the mere learning of bare facts.[[125]](#footnote-125)

In his “Education after Auschwitz” Adorno expands on these connections. People with “reified consciousness” are discussed in terms of their deficit in love. “With this type” Adorno then claims “who tends to fetishize technology, we are concerned, baldly put, with people who cannot love.”[[126]](#footnote-126) A person who cannot love resembles for Adorno a “societal monad” whose “coldness” and “indifference to the fate of others” was “the pathogenic character” that lead to Auschwitz.[[127]](#footnote-127) Thus:

“those people are thoroughly cold; deep within themselves they must deny the possibility of love, must withdraw their love from other people initially, before it can even unfold.”[[128]](#footnote-128)

In the same vein the “power of reflection” and of reflecting critically is also thought by Adorno in terms of love, because to be able to do so means to be able to belong “to *all* people without exception as they exist today.”[[129]](#footnote-129) The universal character of love is then amplified by the fact that love for Adorno is indifferent in that it does not differentiate between worthy and unworthy objects “for the people whom one should love are themselves such that they cannot love, and therefore in turn are not at all that lovable.”[[130]](#footnote-130) Specifically, in all these different educational considerations, the concept of critique is articulated by Adorno in association with love. The absence of the one means a non-existence of the other and vice-versa.

Such a bringing together of two seemingly unrelated concepts (critique and love) by one of the instigators of critical-theory might seem bizarre – perhaps simply a romantic glitch of a philosopher. But love and its relation to critique does not represent a new theme for Adorno, and certainly not one that he thought to be a matter of rhetoric or trifle. Already in 1939 Adorno publishes an extensive essay “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love.”[[131]](#footnote-131) Published the same year that Adorno and Horkheimer launched their collaboration on their “*Dialectic of the Enlightenment*,”the essay on Kierkegaard extended Adorno’s early interest in the so called “Young Hegelian” tradition, that was already displayed in his habilitation, published in 1933.[[132]](#footnote-132) While the habilitation focused on Kierkegaard’s religious thinking as an Aesthetical construction, his stand-alone paper scrutinized more specifically Kierkegaard’s Christian doctrine of love, presented mainly in his *Leben und Walten der Liebe* (Works of Love), as a critical endeavor. Adorno’s key points in this paper then expand on the relations between critique and theology in Kierkegaard’s “collection of so-called edifying discourses”, and it is this connection that Adorno makes that should command our attention.[[133]](#footnote-133)

There are three points to note. First, according to Adorno, Kierkegaard converts the Christian notion of love (*agape*)into social categories.[[134]](#footnote-134) This means that loving people is equivalent for Kierkegaard to resisting the modern conditions that enslave them. The Christian motif of a “Love Supreme” – to use the title of John Coltrane’s 1965 Jazz standard – operates as a type of critique against the reification of human beings.[[135]](#footnote-135) Adorno’s main thesis, as he puts it, is that Kierkegaard’s doctrine of love enables him “…like few other writers, to perceive decisive character features of the typical individual of modern society,” and that this means in particular that “Kierkegaard regards the criticism of progress and civilization: as the criticism of the reification of man.”[[136]](#footnote-136)

For Adorno “it is this awareness which invests Kierkegaard’s critical motives with their genuine earnestness and dignity.”[[137]](#footnote-137) It is not only that Kierkegaard’s doctrine of love has a “critical potential.”[[138]](#footnote-138) More particularly, love is a critical category. This means that love liberates human beings from the entrapment in enslaving circumstances because it turns into an analysis of and a hostility “toward the dominating mechanisms of a society that turns human beings into a mass.”[[139]](#footnote-139) To love means in this sense to be critical of entrapment, and in such a way to resist its sway over human lives.

Kierkegaard’s love is thus a form of critical-theology. This is the second point to note. Critical-theology means that the Christian supremacy of love is reformulated as a critique of modernity. Critique denotes a resistance to the “net like” conditions and “machinery” of the modern world that make people into things.[[140]](#footnote-140) The concept of critique is here of relevance exactly because Adorno ascribes to Kierkegaard’s doctrine of love what he applied to the definition of a critical theory. To some extent, such an argument enables Adorno to distance Kierkegaard’s existentialism from Heidegger’s jargon of authenticity.[[141]](#footnote-141) It also endows Kierkegaard with an almost prophetic critique of the modern “mass society” which “in speaking of the mass meetings of the 1848 period, seems to have heard those loudspeakers which filled the Berlin Sportpalast one hundred years later.”[[142]](#footnote-142) Crucial here, however, is the fact that for Adorno, Kierkegaard does not simply bring the theological notion of *agape* to bear on philosophical scrutiny. More profoundly he marks a clear dependency of critique on theology. Such dependency is reflected for example by the relations between critique and the godly object to which love refers. Critique may attain knowledge of the godly “absolute” only by “sacrificing itself.”[[143]](#footnote-143) Self-sacrifice is, arguably, a devout measure adopted by critique. As such a religious measure it indicates “not so much the expropriation of philosophy by theology as the transplantation of theology into the philosophical realm.”[[144]](#footnote-144)

Yet, what concerns Adorno mostly, is the fact that Kierkegaard’s critical theological attempt to deny the “reification” of human beings ends with a failure. This is the third and last point: Kierkegaard’s critical-theology, according to Adorno, fails.[[145]](#footnote-145) A failure means that Kierkegaard’s approach “acknowledges the very same reification of man against which Kierkegaard's doctrine of love is directed.”[[146]](#footnote-146) Love in such a way ends with supporting reification rather than dismissing it.

The reason for such a failure lies in the fact that love, for Kierkegaard remains “a matter of pure inwardness” – a retreat to an “interior” realm of the subject over and against the external world that includes other people. Consequently, Kierkegaard’s love is directed by the individual to his or her own subjectivity alone.[[147]](#footnote-147) The love of God becomes a love that “is determined only by the subjective qualities of the loving one, such as disinterestedness, unlimited confidence, unobtrusiveness, mercifulness, even if one is helpless oneself, self-denial and fidelity.”[[148]](#footnote-148) In such a way love denies not only reciprocity but also a separate existence of an-other beloved subject. To love god, or better to love the love of god, is consumed by the loving subject alone. Love thus can only be an appropriation of self-love.

An appropriation of love means also that love is a positive form of critique because in resisting the world it is directed at affirming inner qualities of the individual that it wishes to constitute or to possess. Thus:

“What is introduced here as an exegesis of Christian Love, is revealed, through a more intimate knowledge of Kierkegaard's philosophy, as supplementing his negative theology with a positive one, his criticism with something edifying in the literal sense, his dialectics with simplicity.”[[149]](#footnote-149)

For Adorno, the main problem with such a “positive” appropriation of love lies not in its “simplicity” per-se or its cultivating character, but rather in its rendering of other human beings superfluous. To put it differently, a retreat to an “interior” realm of the subject is made over against the external social world.

Peter Gordon rightly pointed out that such a “philosophy of the interior” means that Kierkegaard’s love is “object-less” because it is directed by the individual to his or her own subjectivity. But in his paper, Adorno accentuates more radically the consequential fact that Kierkegaard’s love is “universal” in being a love of no one. “Perhaps one may most accurately summarize Kierkegaard’s doctrine of love,” Adorno argues, “by saying that he demands that love behave towards all men as if they were dead.”[[150]](#footnote-150) Love can then “easily turn into its opposite, a universal hatred of human beings.” It “threatens, at any given moment, to become transformed into the darkest hatred of man.”[[151]](#footnote-151) Love, Adorno concludes, becomes “demonic love” – a retreat to pure inwardness to the extent of exhibiting animosity towards an imagined hostile exteriority which, again, include all human beings.

As a type of theology, “demonic” love is arguably gnostic because it points to a stark dualism between the loving individual who encompasses the love of god, and the devious external world. Earlier in this chapter Adorno’s critique of theology was associated with his contribution to the debates over Gnosticism from the 1950s and 1960s and one may see in “demonic love” another example for this association. Here, in particular, Adorno seems to flesh out the type of radical, perhaps narcissistic “inwardness”, that is a central characteristic of the gnostic “knowledge” of the divine core that lies within the depth of the human soul. Adorno makes the case rather clear since for him “Kierkegaard is unaware of the demonic consequence that his insistence on inwardness actually leaves the world to the devil.”[[152]](#footnote-152) The demonic characteristic of love emphasizes in such a way that Kierkegaard’s Christian love ends with reinstating the problem of gnostic dualism between the benevolent god and evil world (or in this case a demiurgic power). The particular failure that Adorno attributes to Kierkegaard implies then also the modern failure in overcoming gnosis in general.

One of the main outcomes of such a failure lies in an inconsistency between the inward character of love and the critique of social domination that love should have represented. The demand to love other human beings is impossible to fulfill when, for example, “the love of the neighbor” is no more than “the reduplication of one's own ego,” or when love means viewing all other people as if they were dead.[[153]](#footnote-153) With the emphasis on others, at stake for Adorno is Kierkegaard’s orientation towards this worldliness. For sure, what makes other human beings loveable is their inherent godly feature. But if for Kierkegaard humans are loved because they are nothing but a replica of god, are they not marked by the instrumental “sameness” that he condemned? Arguably, loving the image of god in the “other” (and especially as a reproduction of self-love), makes all other human beings to represent nothing more than an instrument for the love of god rather than an end for themselves. The focus on the oneness of god in us all does not only ignore in such a way the uniqueness of each concrete individual. It also converts human beings into instruments of love and thus back to things. Adorno seems to clearly distinguish here between loving the godly feature in humanity, and loving concrete human beings; between the caring for particular others in all their diversity, uniqueness and actual individuality, and the love of the humane which renders such a notion of others redundant. The failure of Kierkegaard’s critical-theology lies then in its reemploying the type of instrumental relationship that characterize the demonic feature of reification, against which he set out his critique of social domination. This critique ends therefore with a demonic hatred of humans and Adorno concludes that “the presuppositions of this doctrine of the neighbor and, at the same time, of love itself, are untenable.”[[154]](#footnote-154) Love cannot fulfil its critical calling.

Overcoming this failure of critique seems to be what Adorno’s own “edifying discourses” drive at. The following lines from “Education after Auschwitz” may be hence read as composed with Kierkegaard in mind:

“One of the greatest impulses of Christianity, not immediately identical with its dogma, was to eradicate the coldness that permeates everything. But this attempt failed; surely because it did not reach into the societal order that produces and reproduces that coldness.”[[155]](#footnote-155)

To “reach into the societal order”, however, does not mean for Adorno an abandonment of Kierkegaard’s love but rather a more compound holding to it by resisting its “demonic” potential – ensuring a theology of love by critically overriding it. The point to note is that we are engaged in Adorno’s terms of love with another mode of reconceptualization of theological concepts that saves a theological charge, by its dismissal. Under such a composition, love is still “something immediate and in essence contradicts mediated relationship” as Kierkegaard argued.[[156]](#footnote-156) It is still redolent of its universal (belonging to “all people”), indifferent (does not differentiating between potential worthy and unworthy objects of love), and spontaneous (“something immediate and in essence contradicts mediated relationships”) characteristics that Anders Nygern for example strongly associated with the Christian “agape motif.”[[157]](#footnote-157) In the same vein, love remains exactly because of these characteristics a critical category, which is perhaps the central feature that Adorno ascribes to Kierkegaard’s doctrine.

Nonetheless, Adorno assumes these theological orientations in order to turn away from Kierkegaard’s solitude of “inwardness.” The interlocking of the “power of reflection” with interpersonal love (the so-called “belonging to *all* people as they exist today”) marks the case in point. In showing some similarity to Levinas’ ontological quest from that time, Adorno seems to present education with a shift from “solitude” to “relation.”[[158]](#footnote-158) Redeploying theology by means of critique points in this case to a relating to the “world in which we exist” rather than a retreating to the solitude of the self. This new term of a “love supreme” is critical because it offers resistance “to the expanding heteronomy.”[[159]](#footnote-159) Still imbued with this theological image, critique therefore aims at fulfilling its original calling when the world of human beings, and not the solitude of the loving individual, stands as the arena of an uninstrumental love.

The last point may perhaps show some similarity between Adorno’s critical self-reflection and the Jewish concept of “Mitzva” (an obligation that is performed in the world and mostly as a duty to others). It is a question, however, to what extent Adorno was aware of this connection between the interpersonal love with which he expressed his distancing from Christianity and relational duties that brings him closer to the Jewish religious vocabulary. Not less interesting is the fact that the concept of “a love of the world” may be seen as embedded in a turn from inwardness to a relation to others, even though such a concept is more commonly associated with Hannah Arendt than with Adorno.[[160]](#footnote-160) In Adorno’s loving (and in this sense critical) commitment to the world one may speak of a de-demonization of love because it shifts from a “demonic” hatred of humans to an interpersonal relation that informs the critical resistance to social domination. It is perhaps also possible to evoke in this case Adorno’s concept of “inverse theology” by suggesting, however, that in the context of education the inversion relates to a turn from Kierkegaard’s look “inwardly” to an emphasis that “suffering be remedied and society redeemed.”[[161]](#footnote-161)

Kierkegaard’s love in such a way is not refuted, but rather upheld by being disavowed in accordance with an immanent critique that redeploys theological concepts. Holding to a lost theological mission, saves its most intimate core relation between critique and theology, by subversively turning against it. Subversion, resistance, and perhaps irony, are parts of the critical promise of theology. Perhaps like in Freud’s analysis of the Mosaic tables, love is turned upside down – from self-love to the love of others, from inwardness to the redeeming of society, from the inner qualities of the loving subject to the educational obligation to fellow human being.

c. Messianic Passion

I wish to conclude the discussion of Adorno’s critique of theology, featured in his educational addresses, with pointing to its relation to Messianism. There is, it seems, a connection between Adorno’s call for an education for critical self-reflection and his articulation of messianic expectations. Adorno’s approach to Messianism is captured rather well by Elliot Wolfson. For Wolfson Adorno’s “decisively secular” thought is, nonetheless:

“rooted in what has been called the ‘Jewish passion for the impossible’ a fidelity to the idea of redemption that assumes the form of its refusal – in the traditional idiom, the Messiah can be present only in the absence of being present.”[[162]](#footnote-162)

This composition points to Adorno’s messianic “passion” because the quest for “uttering the unutterable” makes a “valid redemptive response” that “involves turning away from redemption.”[[163]](#footnote-163) Thus, in what has been termed in this chapter holding to an unholdable object, “the possibility of redemption” is bound inescapably to the “impossibility of its actualization.”[[164]](#footnote-164) In such a compound way one may endow Adorno with a “noneschatological eschatology” which is, to emphasize again, a turn away from redemption that is made, however, for the sake of still holding to the theological hope that it represents.[[165]](#footnote-165)

With this messianic passion in mind, one may reflect on some of Adorno’s main arguments that were discussed above. Adorno’s concurrent holding to and dismissing of Hegel’s secularization of the eschatological expectations is one example. Here Adorno turns away from Hegel’s positive hopes for redemption while, nonetheless, holding to the idea of redemption – a point that Adorno stresses already in the closing statement of his *Minima Moralia*.[[166]](#footnote-166) One holds to the messianic idea only by revoking it. The same may be said in relation to the notion of critical self-reflection, central to Adorno’s discussion of education. In calling for a critical self-reflection in education Adorno holds to an object that can be realized only by not being realized and in such a way takes distance from any redemptive hopes concerning “the Absolute” in order, however, “not to betray” such redemptive hopes.

Love represents, arguably, the clearest example for these relations since the advocating for interpersonal love points to a double resistance. On the one hand, there is a resistance to the social and political conditions that enslave us with which Adorno thought to reiterate Kierkegaard’s love. It represents a thrust against “coldness” and the “lack” of love that enable the subordination of human beings to the “machine” and of which the transformation of *Bildung* into *Halbbildung* served as an acute example. Here, the gift of love denotes a critical capacity of human beings to transgress such social domination by subversively working against it. On the other hand, Adorno also presents a resistance to Kierkegaard’s, arguably narcissistic, self-love, which imagines it has the absolute under its command; and this turn away from Kierkegaard’s theology involves Adorno’s holding to what Wolfson underlined as a redemptive approach that is bound to the “impossibility” of its actualization. One may see here not only a philosophical commitment to theology, but also a, one could argue, rather clever reposing on one theological tradition (that of Jewish Messianism) in order to amend another (that of Christian faith).

Arendt’s rather shrewd comment that Adorno was Walter Benjamin’s (for her only) student, seems to be here rather fitting. Adorno makes his identification with Benjamin’s messianism explicit. For him it is Benjamin’s type of “messianism” that attempts “to formulate a materialist conception of history, albeit one that is shot through with theological ideas that are presented in terms of a highly negative dialectic.”[[167]](#footnote-167) As presented in Ch. 2, such an arrangement characterized Benjamin’s nihilism, suggesting a messianic time that is though embedded within history (in every “present moment”) not revealed by the course of history. In this last sense Benjamin holds to a messianic potential that, even if innate in the historical time (and the immanent world) lies beyond its worldly flux. Potentially, this approach could be associated with a notion of exile. This type of complete resignation, supported by a separation between history and redemption – cosmology and soteriology – is for Adorno what Benjamin’s concept of a “messianic arrest of happening” stands for: A potential for a messianic eruption that may penetrate history but that is not actualized within its course.[[168]](#footnote-168)

Adorno’s explicit critique of messianic traditions may be read against such a backdrop. The theme is discussed for example in his classroom lectures on metaphysics. Here Adorno stresses his opposition to the mystical traditions that hold to an “affirmative or positive theses of metaphysics.”[[169]](#footnote-169) Arguably, what Adorno seems to rebuke is an “affirmative or positive” understanding of the messianic moment.[[170]](#footnote-170) Messianism then still remains for Adorno a valuable “primal religious experiences.”[[171]](#footnote-171) Those are, however, positive interpretations of redemption that “simply become blasphemies” because they “effectively demonizes the absolute” in a way that “turns God into an abyss.”[[172]](#footnote-172)

This last point seems to be important. The “blasphemy” that is enclosed in such a messianic “turn” relates to “vulgar materialism” which means that one encloses a positive redemptive meaning in history. In a more concrete tone, Messianism, cannot be about the affirmation of faith, the attaining of redemption through acts of sovereignty, the justifying of nationalism, the fighting of “just wars”, or the oppressing of others. It also cannot support political-theological national arguments about historical rights or god’s promise. But surely one may think in such a way also of Adorno’s mistrust in the social and political activism of the German student movement in the 1960s, expressed for example in his famous correspondence with Marcuse.[[173]](#footnote-173) In pointing to the student’s “streak of coldness” for example, Adorno seems to be concerned less with their lack of critical awareness and more with their transformation of critique to an ideological zeal.[[174]](#footnote-174) It is, arguably, a moment in which critique itself may become what Isiah Berlin called a “positive doctrine of liberation by reason” by offering a positive actualization of critique’s redemptive promise.[[175]](#footnote-175) In a play on Adorno’s compositions we may speak here of a critique that is not realized by being realized because it is fulfilled by suggesting itself as worthy of compliance and in this sense by working against itself. In such a case, unrefined materialism simply means a bowdlerizing of transcendence by transforming the content that was associated with it to represent nothing more than another mechanism of violence and control.

To some extent, the messianic materialism that Adorno identifies in contemporary political agendas is connected by him with “the intricate interrelationship between gnosticism, Neo Platonism, the Cabbala, and later Christian mysticism” and in particular the adaptation of the “Sohar” by German Idealism.[[176]](#footnote-176) It might be hard to defend this bringing together of a rather broad array of redemptive and messianic traditions in one educational stroke. Still, Adorno’s moral aim is to point to a vulgarization of Messianism, that is based on the intertwining of transcendence and immanence, cosmology and soteriology, divine time and historical time, even if perhaps on the expense of scholarly precision. He therefore turns not against a messianic interest in this world, but rather against a particular expression of such an interest. Wolfson’s pointing to the Jewish messianic idiom “the Messiah can be present only in the absence of being present” seems indeed to illuminate Adorno’s reproach of these messianic traditions, and of their political implications, on the one hand and his own quest for a critical Messianism (to put it like this) that is based on an “uttering the unutterable” on the other hand. The “messianic idea” (as Benjamin had put it) is only that which always remain constantly absent. One may perhaps talk here of an “heretic” turn against all former messianic heresies that rejects their various historical appearances, for the sake of holding nonetheless to their core theological rationale.[[177]](#footnote-177)

Such an approach to Messianism exemplifies what has been presented in research as Adorno’s negative theology.[[178]](#footnote-178) There is, nonetheless, a particular take on such a theology to consider. Taken to represent the limits in our capacity to represent and in this sense know the limitless, eternal, transcendent and divine, negative theology is about the exclusive articulation of non-divinity (or to put it simply an articulation of what is not god). I tend to agree that such an apophatic approach is part of Adorno’s argument. Nevertheless, one must also not overlook Adorno’s particular understanding of negativity in this context. Not precisely about the inability to represent the divine, negativity points to the possibility of representation by means of non-representation. A *Bilderverbot* (the biblical prohibition on the making of idols and images), that Adorno openly associates in relation to such a negative theological imagination, is then of a unique kind.[[179]](#footnote-179) There is indeed a prohibition of making an image of god, but it is set not because of the impossibility of any knowledge of the (godly) but rather because it is the only viable way to still hold to the possibility of such a knowledge in material reality which is now pregnant of a theological, indeed Messianic, passion. Thus for Adorno:

“It is only in the absence of images that the full object could be conceived. Such absence concurs with the theological ban on images. Materialism brought that ban into secular form by not permitting Utopia to be positively pictured; this is the substance of its negativity. At its most materialistic, materialism comes to agree with theology. Its great desire would be the resurrection of the flesh, a desire utterly foreign to idealism, the realm of the absolute spirit.”[[180]](#footnote-180)

In absence, then, we may conceive that which is unconceivable. One may associate here Adorno’s reflecting on the “fruitless waiting” – a Weberian image that refers particularly to the Jewish messianic expectations – at the end of his classroom lectures on metaphysics.[[181]](#footnote-181) Contrary to Weber, however, Adorno upholds such waiting to be “no doubt the form in which metaphysical experience manifests itself most strongly to us.”[[182]](#footnote-182) Is it not that very “waiting” that embodies the “absence” (of a Messiah) as the only possible way of conceiving it within the boundaries of a “world in which we live”? In its association with a “fruitless waiting”, metaphysics, and thus critical thinking, demonstrates a subtle rejection of Messianism, that is the only way, however, to still hold to its passion. This is also true, ceteris paribus, of education. Perhaps as a type of a “melancholic” engagement with the cultivation of humans, education should not aim at morning a lost object, but rather at being attentive to the ever-present possibility of its resurrection.[[183]](#footnote-183) Its critical mission navigates itself in such a way in the troubling waters whirling between an imagined Scylla and Charybdis: On the one hand to “rescue” of theology, and on the other hand to suspend its worldly realization.

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2. Theodor Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, in: idem., *Critical Models*,191. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See for example in: Theodor Adorno, “Philosophy and Teachers”, in: idem., *Critical Models,* 19-36 (broadcasted on December 7, 1961 by the radio services of Hessen under the title “Lehrer und Philosophie: Ansprache an Studenten”) and Theodor Adorno, “The Meaning of Working through the Past”, in: idem., *Critical Models,* 89-104 (broadcasted on February, 7 1960 by the radio services of Hessen under the title “Was bedeutet: Aufarbeitung der Vergangenheit?”). See also: Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”,194-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
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6. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 24. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 145. In metaphysics “nothing can be even experienced as living if it does not contain a promise of something transcending life.” [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 98. See also: Gerhard Richter, *Thinking with Adorno: The Uncoercive Gaze.* New York: Fordham UP, 2019, 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 86. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 51. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See also the point made in: Hent de Vries, Minimal Theologies: Critiques of Secular Reason in Adorno and Levinas. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005, 57. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 101. See also in Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 361: “After Auschwitz, our feelings resist any claim of the positivity of existence as sanctimonious, as wronging the victims.” Auschwitz then makes “a mockery of the construction of immanence as endowed with a meaning radiated by an affirmatively posited transcendence.” [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
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20. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 101. For the concept of “civilizational break” see: Dan Diner (Hg.). *Zivilisationsbruch: Denken nach Auschwitz.* Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1988; ders.  *Beyond the Conceivable: Studies on Germany, Nazism and the Holocaust.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
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23. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Adorno, “Critique”, 281. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 19. Emphasis in the original. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. See in: Adorno, “The Meaning of Working through the Past”*,* 98. See also: Adorno, „Why Still Philosophy”, 11. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
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31. See the point made also by Paul Mendes-Flohr, “To Brush History Against the Grain”: The Eschatology of the Frankfurt School and Ernst Bloch”, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion,* 51.4 (1983): 631-650. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 88-89. This also differentiates according to Adorno between Aristotle’s metaphysics and Plato’s doctrine of ideas in which there is still a relation between god and world. See: Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 18, 85. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 77. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
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36. See for example: Yotam Hotam, “Gnosis and Modernity - a Postwar German Intellectual Debate on Secularisation, Religion and 'Overcoming' the Past”, *Totalitarian Movements and Political*

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37. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 122. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
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39. Hans Jonas, “Gnosticism and Modern Nihilism”, *Social Research* 19 (1952): 430–452. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. Hans Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age,* Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy,* 138; Hotam, “Gnosis and Modernity”, 591-608.  [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. Ernst Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 2000, 279-282. Jacob Taube, *Gnosis und Politik.* München: W. Fink, 1984; Gerschom Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition,* New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960. See also: Christoph Schmidt, “The Leviathan Crucified. A Critical Introduction to Jacob Taubes’ “The Leviathan as Mortal God”, *Political Theology,* 19.3 (2018): 172-192.; Eliot R. Wolfson, *Poetic Thinking,* Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015*,* 189; Benjamin M. Korstvedt, *Listening for Utopia in Ernst Bloch’s Musical Philosophy,* Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2010, 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. See for example: Gershom Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays in Jewish Spirituality*. New York: Schocken, 1971, 133. Here Scholem refers specifically to Hans Jonas’ *Gnosis und Spätantiker Geist.* See also: Gershom Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition. New York: Jewish Theological Seminar, 1960. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. See: Angermann, *Briefwechsel*, 9-12. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Adorno, *History and Freedom,* 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. G. W. F. Hegel, “The Spirit of Christianity and its Fate”,In: ders. *Early Theological Writings*, Chicago: Chicago UP, 1948, 182-301. [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Adorno, “Progress”, 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Karl Loewith, *Meaning in History,* Chicago: Chicago UP, 1949. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 95. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 117. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
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53. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 147-148. [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, 154. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* 152. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 361. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. See for example also in: Theodor Adorno, *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture.* New York: Routledge, 1991,5. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Adorno, *History and Freedom,* 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
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60. Adorno, *History and Freedom,* 76-78. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. Adorno, “Halbbildung”, 93-121. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. See for example: Sharon Jessop, “Education for Citizenship and 'Ethical Life' and Exploration of the Hegelian Concepts of *Bildung* and Sittlichkeit”, *Journal of Philosophy of Education,* 46.2 (2012): 287-302; Heinz Sünker, *Politics, Bildung and Social Studies: Perspectives for a Democratic Society.* Rotterdam: Sense, 2006; Christiane Thompson, “The Non-Transparency of the Self and the Ethical Value of Bildung,” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 39. 3 (2005): 519–34; Walter Bauer, “Introduction.” *Educational Philosophy and Theory*. 35.2 (2003): 133-137; Fritz Ringer, “Bildung: The social and Ideological Context of the German Historical Tradition,” *History of European Ideas* 10.2 (1989): 193-202; David Sorkin, “Wilhelm von Humboldt: The Theory and Practice of Self-Formation (Bildung), 1791–1810,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44 (1983): 55-74; Heinz-Joachim Heydron*, Über den Widerspruch von Bildung und Herrschaft.* Frankfurt aM.: FRG Syndikat, 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Wilhelm von Humboldt, *The Sphere and Duties of Government.* London: John Chapman 1854, 11. See also: Wilhelm von Humboldt, *Ideen zu einem Versuch die Gränzen der Wirksamkeit des Staats zu bestimmen.* Berslau: Verlag von Eduard Trewendt, 1851, 9: “Die Wahre Zweck des Menschen […] ist die höchste und proportionirlichste Bildung seiner Kräfte zu einem Ganzen.“ [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Bauer, “Introduction”, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Humboldt, *The Sphere,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Aschheim, “German Jews beyond *Bildung* and Liberalism: The Jewish Radical Revival in the Weimar Republic,” in: Klaus L. Berghahn, ed. *The German-Jewish Dialogue Reconsidered: A Symposium in Honor of George L. Mosse.* New York: Peter Lang, 1996, 31-44. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. Ringer, “Bildung”, 199. On the centrality of progress see also: Adorno, *Halbbildung,* 97. See also: Bauer, “Introduction”, 134; Jessop, “Education for Citizenship”, 287. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. Klaus Prange, “Bildung: A Paradigm Regained?”, *European Educational Research Journal,* 3.2 (2004): 508. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe, Lexikon Zur Politisch-Sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*. Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1984, 210; Bauer, “Introduction”, 134-135. Yotam Hotam, “Bildung: Liberal Education and its Devout Origins”, *Journal of the Philosophy of Education.* 54.3 (2019):619-632. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. Hotam, “Bildung”,619-632. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. See: Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, “The Education of the Human Race”, in: Henry Chadwick ed. *Lessing’s Theological Writings,* Stanford: Stanford UP, 1956, 83. In 1932 Adorno taught Lessing’s theory of education in a seminar together with Paul Tillich. See: Adorno, *History and Freedom*, XV. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. [Bildung] „ist zu sozialisierter Halbbildung geworden, der Allgegenwart des entfremdeten Geistes.“ Adorno, “Halbbildung”, 93. I slightly amended the English translation to better reflect Adorno’s theological association. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Adorno, “Halbbildung”, 94. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Adorno, “Halbbildung”, 105: “Der Glaube an den Geist mag den theologischen ins Wesenlose säkularisiert haben.” [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. This is a slightly amended translation of: Adorno, “*Pseudo-Culture”,* 19. See also the German original: “Der Traum der Bildung, Freiheit vom Diktat der Mittel, der sturen und kargen Nützlichkeit, wird verfälscht zur Apologie der Welt, die nach jenem Diktat eingerichtet ist” in: Adorno, *Halbbildung*, 98. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Adorno, “Halbbildung”*,* 104. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. Max Horkheimer, Critical Theory. New York: Seabury Press, 1982, 244. See also :*“Die Emanzipation des Menschen aus versklavenden Verhältnissen*„ in: Max Horkheimer, Kritische Theorie. Fankfurt aM.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1982, 194*.* [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. See already in: Theodor W. Adorno & Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment.* New York: Herder and Herder, 1972*,* 162. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. This is a slightly amended translation of Adorno, “Pseudo-Culture”*,* 32 which refers to the German passage “Halbbildung hat das geheime Königreich zu dem aller gemacht„ See in: Adorno, “Halbbildung”*,* 113. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Georg Lukacs, “Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat”, in: ders. *History and Class Consciousness,* Cambridge Mass.: MIT Press, 1971, 83-222. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, 194-200. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. Brian O’Connor (ed). *The Adorno Reader,* Malden: Blackwell Publishers, 2000, 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. O’Connor, *The Adorno Reader,* 14. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Adorno, *The Culture Industry,* 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. Adorno, *Halbbildung,* 115. I slightly adjusted the original English translation of a “permanent short-circuit.” [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Fritz Lang, *Metropolis.* Germany: UFA, 1928. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Theodor Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic.* Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1989,131. [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. Hotam, *Modern Gnosis,* 32-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents.* New York: W. W. Norton and Co., 1961, 34. See also: Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz*”,* 191. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See in: Angermann, *Briefwechsel,* 83-84, 408-409; Peter Gordon, “The Odd Couple”, *The Nation,* June 9 2016. <https://www.thenation.com/article/the-odd-couple/>. Scholem, however, remained skeptical as to whether Adorno remains loyal to Hegel’s intensions. [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. Immanuel Kant, “An Answer to the Question what is Enlightenment”, in: idem. *Practical Philosophy*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 22. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Adorno, *The Culture Industry,* 100. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Adorno, *The Culture Industry,* 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. TheodorAdorno, “Reason and Revelation”, in: idem. *Critical Models,* 139. The lecture “Offenbarund oder autonome Vernunft” was broadcasted by Wesdeutscher Rundfunk, on 20 November 1957. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. Adorno, *The Culture Industry,* 98-99. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. Adorno & Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. Martin Heidegger, “The Question Concerning Technology”, in idem.: *The Question Concerning Technology, and Other Essays*, New York & London: Garland Publishing, 1977, 3-35. Originally published in: Martin Heidegger, “Die Frage nach Technik”, in ders. *Vorträge und Aufsätze*, Band 7. Frankfurt aM.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1954, 5-36. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. Terence Holden, “Adorno and Arendt: Transitional Regimes of Historicity”, *New German Critique* 46.1 (2019): 41-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Adorno, *The Culture Industry,* 18. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. See also Adorno’s personal reflections on the “guilt” of “one who escaped by accident” and was consequently “spared”, in Adorno, *Negative,* 363. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. For a critique of Adorno’s universalization of Auschwitz See: Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s),* London: Verso, 1996, 23-24, who criticizes it as a case of European “universalization of its own particularism.” [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. See in: Theodor Adorno, “The Meaning of Working through the Past”*,* in: idem. *Critical Models,* 92. For Adorno the reluctance to “throw any wrenches into the machinery” (*Sand ins Getrieb*) characterizes “the desire to get on with things” in post-war Germany. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. See for example: Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, 192; idem., “Why Still Philosophy”, 102. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Theodor Adorno, “Gloss on Personality”, in: idem., *Critical Models,* 164. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Mendes-Flohr, *“To Brush”,* 634-635. On negativity as “nonidentity” see also: Nelson, *Levinas, Adorno, and the Ethics of the Material Other*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2020, 4-5. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Peter Gordon, *Migrants in the Profane.* New Haven: Yale UP, 2020*,* 146. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Adorno, “Gloss on Personality”*,* 164. The public lecture „Persönlichkeit: Höchstes Glück der Erdenkinder?“ was broadcasted by the Westdeutscher Rundfunk on January 2, 1966. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Theodor Adorno, “Gloss on Personality”*,* 164. See also Adorno, “The Meaning of Working through the Past”, 101. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy”, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Adorno, “Philosophy and Teachers”,21. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. See: Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy”, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy”, 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Theodor Adorno, “Why still Philosophy”, 5-6. See also: Axel Honneth, *Pathololgies of Reason: On the Legacy of Critical Theory*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, 26-27; Wolfson, *Poetic,* 182. [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy”, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”*,* 192; idem., “Why Still Philosophy”, 102.  [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 96. [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 320. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. Adorno, „Why Still Philosophy”*,* 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 135. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Theodor Adorno, “Resignation”, in idem., “*Critical Models”,* 292. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. See especially in Hegel, *The Spirit of Christianity.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. See a similar argument made by Kathy J. Kiloh, “Adorno’s Materialist Ethic of Love”, in: Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky, (eds.). *A Companion to Adorno.* Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020, 601. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 126. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Theodor Adorno, “Philosophy and Teachers”, 28. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, 200. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Ibid.202-203. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. Ibid, 200-201. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Ibid, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Theodor W. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love,” *[Zeitschrift fur Sozialforschung,](https://archive.org/details/ZeitschriftFrSozialforschung8.Jg)* [8](https://archive.org/details/ZeitschriftFrSozialforschung8.Jg).3 (1939): 413-429. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Theodor Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1962. On Kierkegaard’s importance for Adorno see for example: Asaf Angermann, *[Beschädigte Ironie: Kierkegaard, Adorno und die Negative Dialektik Kritischer Subjektivität](https://www.amazon.com/-/he/dp/3110308487/ref=sr_1_2?dchild=1&qid=1622531335&refinements=p_27%3AAsaf+Angermann&s=books&sr=1-2).* Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014; Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 160. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s Doctrine of Love,”, 413. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. See also: Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Agape as a “motif” is especially presented in Anders Nygern, *Agape and Eros.* Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1953, 61-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 31. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity*, New York: SUNY, 2007, 35. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. See for example in Adorno, “Why Still Philosophy”, 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Kiloh, “Adorno’s Materialist Ethics”, 608. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 424. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 414. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. See also the point made by: Marcia Morgan, “Reading Kierkegaard”, in: Peter E. Gordon, Espen Hammer, and Max Pensky, (eds.). *A Companion to Adorno.* Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons, 2020, 38. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. See also Angermann, *Ironie,* 127-129 and Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 25 who rightly point out that Adorno’s critique of Kierkegaard’s retreat to an “interior” realm of the subject is a central argument already in his *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetics.* [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 416-417. For Kierkegaard “that we think lovingly of those who passed away is a deed of truly unselfish love.” Because the dead, however, “is no actual object” such a love means that one “recollects the dead as what resides in the one living.” Adorno calls this love for the dead “both the worst and the best part of [Kierkegaard’s] doctrine of love” See: Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 427-428.   [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. See: David Sherman, *Sartre and Adorno: The Dialectics of Subjectivity*, New York: SUNY, 2007, 34. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 420. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Adorno, “On Kierkegaard’s”, 421. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Adorno, *“*Education after Auschwitz*”,* 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. Adorno, “Education after Auschwitz”, 202. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. Nygern, *Agape and Eros,* 61-81. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. See for example the opening statement in: Immanuel Levinas, *Time and the Other and Additional Essays.* Pittsburg PA.: Duquesne University Press, 1987, 42. For a similar point see: Nelson, *Levinas,* 2.I thank Cedric Cohen Skalli for pointing me to this aspect of Levinas’ philosophy. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Adorno, “Why still Philosophy”, 5-6. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. For a detailed comparison between Arendt and Adorno see for example: Lars Rensmann, and Samir Gandesha (eds.), Arendt and Adorno: Political and Philosophical Investigations, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 181. On Adorno’s inverse theology see for example: Christopher Craig Brittain, *Adorno and Theology.* London: T&T Clark, 2010, 83-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. Wolfson, *Poetic*, 180. See also Josh Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy,* London: Continuum, 2005, 33 to whom Wolfson also refers. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Wolfson, *Poetic,* 181-182. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Wolfson, *Poetic,* 184. See also: Christoph Schmidt, “The Return of the Dead Souls: The German Students’ Movement and the Holocaust”, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies,* 13.1 (2014): 75-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Wolfson, *Poetic,* 186. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* 247. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 89-90. [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 90-91. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 143. Adorno addresses specifically Schelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Adorno, *History and Freedom*, 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. Ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 121. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. Theodor Adorno & Herbert Marcuse, “Correspondence on the Student Revolution”, *New Left Review* I/233 (1999): 123-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. See in his letter to Marcuse from May 5, 1969, written couple of week after the student’s so called *Busenaktion* had erupted Adorno’s Class in April 22, 1969 and sent him to his vacation from which he never returned. Adorno, “Correspondence on the Student Revolution”, 127. Cited also in Gordon, *Adorno and Existence,* 181. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Isaiah Berlin, “Two Concepts of Liberty”, in: idem., *Four Essays On Liberty*. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1969, p. 118-172. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. Adorno, *Metaphysics,* 138. [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. Angermann, *Briefwechsel*, 415. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. See for example: Elizabeth A. Pritchard, “*Bilderverbot* meets Body in Theodor W. Arorno’s Inverse Theology”, *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 291-318; Alexander Garcia Düttmann, *The Memory of Thought: An Essay on Heidegger and Adorno.* New York: Bloomsbury, 2002, 58-61; Schmidt, “The Return of the Dead Souls, 75-86. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. See for example: Adorno, *Negative Dialectics,* 207. See also: Schmidt, “The Return of the Dead Souls, 75-86; Christoph Schmidt, “The Return of the Katechon: Giorgio Agamben contra Erik Peterson,” *The Journal of Religion* 94.2 (2014): 182-203; Josh Cohen, *Interrupting Auschwitz: Art, Religion, Philosophy,* London: Continuum, 2005, 33; Rebecca Comay, “Materialist Mutations of the Bilderverbot”, in: Michael Levin, *The Discursive Construction of Sight in the History of Philosophy.* Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997, 337-338. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. Adorno, *Negative,* 207.  [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. See in: Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation”, in: Max Weber, *The Vocation Lectures.* Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2004, 30-31. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. Adorno, *Metaphysics*, 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-182)
183. For Adorno’s concept of “melancholic science” see: Adorno, *Minima Moralia,* i. [↑](#footnote-ref-183)