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Taking up what was foreshadowed in last year's instalment of 'Theory on Theory', this chapter takes as its theme the evident and disturbing trend within our field to forget, if not actively attempt to erase, Marxist and dialectical thought. The first section notices this tendency in the course of its wider review of a major new reference work, the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory*. The second section notices another manifestation of the tendency in the course of reviewing a significant new work of metatheoretical reflection and critique, Elizabeth Anker's *On Paradox*. In the third and final section, a cluster of works are reviewed that show the range and ongoing vitality of dialectical thought.

The Misprisions of Theory I: The Encyclopedia

The arrival of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (hereafter *OELT*) is an occasion of some moment for the enterprise of literary theory. It has been a cause for considerable reflection within our field that we are served by a proliferation of theory primers and introductory dictionaries, and yet we possess very few comprehensive reference works. Some have observed that this might reflect the sizeable disproportion between undergraduate-level enthusiasm and serious scholarship in the discipline (a tendency fuelled by the publishing and marketing practices documented in this chapter last year when reviewing *The Summer of Theory* by Philipp Felsch). Now, massive in its own right, the *OELT* takes its place within the even vaster project of the *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Literature*, which 'provides in-depth, foundational articles on both core and emerging topics' under the leadership of 'international experts of the highest caliber' (p. v). The work is aimed at, among others, 'scholars' and 'practitioners' (p. v). According to its website, the *OELT* provides 'a comprehensive coverage of every aspect of literary theory, both traditional and contemporary' and it amounts to 'the most

advanced and comprehensive collection of essays on literary theory ever published’.

As far as I am aware, the only comparable resource is the *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2011, a work of 1,500 pages in three volumes. At 3,000 pages across four volumes and weighing 6 kilograms, the *OELT* forms an even more impressive monument. Few academic salaries, and even fewer academic musculatures, will be equal to its demands. The entries (174 of them) are essays of about fifteen to twenty pages. This is not the only departure from the more traditional version of an encyclopedia. As John Frow says in his introduction, the approach to the essays has been far from uniform: ‘some of them are rich and dense, others are elegant overviews of a field, some have taken a quite polemical stance toward their subject’ (p. xxiii). Accordingly, it is of little use to offer a review that seizes upon the particular content of a handful of *OELT*’s entries. It is enough to observe that its entries are generally on the broad and lengthy side rather than being focused and concise, and that the quality, utility, and framing of each entry vary. Perhaps it might be helpful—meaning nothing pejorative by this—to observe that if this work had been called a *Companion* rather than an *Encyclopedia*, it might give a readier sense of the substance of the enterprise as a whole.

For a reference work, it must be said that the *OELT* does not lend itself to easy use. It does not contain entries in alphabetical order. Rather, it is broken into four sections (Formal Concepts, Identities, Methodologies, Institutions), each of which is arranged in its own individual alphabetical order. And the four sections do not correspond to the four volumes. Rather, each section simply begins where the previous one ends, more or less in the middle of a volume. Thus volume 2, for example, begins with ‘Remediation’ and ends with ‘Theorizing the Subject’. This is not because it has painstakingly laboured across 700 pages from the Rs to the Ts. It is because the first section (Formal Concepts) runs across one and a half volumes, at which point the pagination continues but the alphabetizing begins anew with the beginning of the next section (Identities). Those who are accustomed to being able to use encyclopedias and other reference works by simply turning to the relevant alphabetical entry will find that impossible here. Nor is there a usable table of contents. Among the front matter there is an ‘Alphabetical List of Articles’, but it does not provide page numbers for the entries. There is also a ‘Thematic List of Articles’, in which each of the four sections lays out its entries in alphabetical order. No page numbers are provided there, either. The table of contents does not even indicate which volume contains which sections.

In order to find something, one must first, therefore, peruse the Thematic List of Articles through its four sections until the relevant entry is listed. Often this will be straightforward. One would correctly go straight to the listings of the first section, Formal Concepts, to find, say, 'Heteroglossia'; or would go straight to section 3, Methodologies, for 'Psychoanalytic Theory'. But to which of the four sections should one turn for an entry on 'Love of Literature'? It turns out that this is an Institution. Or 'Mourning and Melancholia'? They, apparently, are Identities. 'Life Writing' sounds like it could be a Formal Concept, but it, too, is among the Identities. 'Speech Acts' and 'Performative Utterances', which sound rather like concepts, are to be found among the Methodologies, while 'Performativity' is a Formal Concept. Meanwhile, the identity politics that drew heavily on performativity has its own entire section of twenty-four entries—but the form of identity politics that is most responsible for disseminating the idea of performativity ('Queer Theory') is to be found among the Methodologies. For 'Lesbian Poetics' one must turn back to Identities. 'Poetics' simpliciter and 'Historical Poetics', however, are found among the Methodologies. Though, whatever the flavour of poetics, if it involves cognition one must put down volumes 3 and 4 and return to volume 1 for Marshall Brown's splendid essay on 'Poetic Cognition' (which is classified as a Formal Concept). 'Queer' and 'Queer Theory' are in separate sections (and volumes)—Identities and Methodologies respectively. But if one was expecting this logic to apply to the separate entries on 'The Postcolonial' and 'Postcolonial Theory', one would be in error, for these are both Methodologies. 'Reception Theory', too, is in Methodologies. But 'Reception in the Digital Era' is in Institutions. 'Creolization', which sounds like, and is treated as, something that happens to identity, is listed among the Formal Concepts, while 'Hybridity', which sounds more like a concept, is listed under Identities (and not within an entry on 'The Postcolonial' or 'Postcolonial Theory', which is the discourse in which it was developed). Amid all of this confusion, the index (contained in volume 4) emerges as a tool of primary importance. For many topics, users will find themselves chasing up references scattered across various pages in multiple entries and volumes.

For such a huge work, there are numerous striking omissions. 'Epic' and 'Romance' are included as Formal Concepts. Other narrative forms—such as the short story, ballad, and, most confoundingly, the novel—are not. There is, however, an entry for 'Theory of the Novel', which, unexpectedly, is to be found among the Methodologies. There is an entry for 'Prose' but not verse. 'Allegory' is included, symbol is not. 'Diaspora' and

‘Transnational’ count as Identities. The nation, which has informed far more literary analysis and theorizing, and without which neither diaspora nor transnationalism has meaning, is absent. Yet it is the nation—with its anthems, flags, festivals, commemorations, and other ritual pieties—that has provided the model for virtually all identity-based movements.

‘New Materialism’ counts as a Methodology, but ‘New Criticism’ does not—nor, scandalously, does materialism proper. And yet both ‘Identification’ and ‘Identity Technologies’ get separate chapters. ‘Temporality’ is treated as an Institution, and ‘Narrative Time’ as a Formal Concept. Both ‘Deconstruction’ and ‘Poststructuralism and Its Discontents’ are covered, but not structuralism. There are individual entries for Chinese, Arabic, and Sanskrit literary theories. ‘Indigenous Studies’—here classified as a Methodology, though really the entries describe a topic rather than anything theoretical—receive substantial coverage in the form of separate chapters for North America, Australia, New Zealand, and Brazil. The omission of the rest of Latin America is rather conspicuous. Also conspicuous is the exclusion of the rich vein of theory that has come from, say, Irish studies.

Lest anyone attribute some or all of these selections to the *OELT* being captive to the trends of the moment, it should be observed that—for a work that likes to speak of a ‘disciplinary ecology’ rather than a ‘discipline’—the present enthusiasm for what is called environmental humanities gets fairly short shrift with just two entries (‘Animal’ and ‘Ecocriticism’). Rather, this encyclopedia’s clear allegiance is to two specific enthusiasms of the present: technology and identity (and, in one striking instance, ‘Technologies of Identity’). I count thirteen entries that revolve around technology in one way or another, and thirty-two that revolve around identity. This means that a quarter of the *OELT* is given over to this pair. As a reflection of the topics that animate and excite literary and other cultural discussion in our moment, particularly in newspapers, blogs, and other organs of the vulgarization of theory, that proportion may not be unfair. As a reflection of contributions made to the actual theorizing of literature, it is absurd.

Truly was it said of the rebuilders of Jerusalem that they carried the sword to protect the labours of their hands. Unfortunately, the integrity of the edifice of literary theory requires that one particular omission in this work—all 3,000 pages and four volumes of it—ought not, in any conscientious review, be allowed to pass without notice and without the gravest censure.

As everyone knows, critical theory—‘theory’ and ‘literary theory’ being later renamings or developments thereof—began as a synonym for Marxism.

To this day, therefore, the whole enterprise of literary theory carries the stamp of Marxism, which invented the discipline in the form in which it exists for us. Without Marxism, there is no surface/depth distinction, no hermeneutic of suspicion, no critique, no historicization, no politicization, no idea that perhaps what is of interest about a literary text is something beyond its own ken. Marxism—beginning with Marx and Engels themselves, well before critical theory—was first with all of these. Its contribution is utterly foundational and its influence all-encompassing. Perhaps no body of thought has developed as many fruitful concepts in literary theory, and certainly none has produced so persuasive an account of the relationship between literature and history. Most of what calls itself literary theory has never even bothered to attempt to match Marxism in developing the most basic of theorizations in the sense of explanations of where literature comes from, or why and when it takes the forms that it does. Nor has any other approach had the courage to rise to the concrete and, in keeping with the title of this chapter, to theorize theory itself at the same time as it theorizes literature. The rather embarrassing truth is that many later theories have done little more than grope at a pale imitation of Marxism by deleting class and inserting some other category. But in the arbitrary and hamfisted attempt to switch the groundwork of the analysis from materialism to something else, they invariably omit to do what made materialism persuasive in the hands of Marxists, namely to elaborate a cogent case for why this new central category should be attributed with a generative influence on literature, and why it accounts for literary history, forms, themes, and so on.

What the *OELT* shares with these inferior, second-order versions of theory is a perverse wish to erase the debt of theory to Marxism and to ignore Marxism's ongoing vitality in the field. The necessity of using the euphemism 'critical theory' in the first place arose from a period of intense political, ideological, legal, and military effort to eradicate Marxist thought and Marxist or other leftist movements. Eerily, the *OELT* seems to inhabit, or to want to revive, that sort of Cold War mentality in its own campaign to write an encyclopedia of literary theory as if Marxism never existed.

That this is part of a wider campaign cannot be doubted. The recent invention of something called 'Economic Criticism' in *The Year's Work in Critical and Cultural Theory*, in order to avoid speaking of Marxism, is testimony to a strange and growing trend. So too are the claims of Elizabeth Anker (see below). But these actions cannot hold a candle to the audacity of producing a 3,000-page *Encyclopedia*, larded with self-congratulation about its 'international experts', 'comprehensive coverage', and 'in-depth, foundational articles', that fails to contain a single entry on Marxist literary

theory. In addition to what has already been mentioned in this review—deconstruction, psychoanalysis, postcolonialism, queer theory—‘Actor-Network Theory’ is here, as are ‘Affect Studies’, ‘Feminist Theory’, ‘Hypertext Theory’, ‘The Matter of Drafts’, ‘Modern Manuscripts’, and ‘Object-Oriented Ontology’. The list could go on, but it would not reach anything Marxist. In an uncanny confirmation of the ongoing relevance and tenacious hold of ideology, there is no entry for the concept of ideology—even though, without it, any political form of literary or cultural criticism would make no sense. There is no entry for dialectical criticism or even for materialism (though, as mentioned, there is of course space for those telltale ‘New Materialisms’). It should be pointed out that the *OELT* does contain an entry on ‘Class’. But its astonishing categorization and treatment as an *identity* would be risible were it not so offensive.

The professional embarrassment that this bizarre anti-Marxist crusade entails for the field of literary theory is highlighted by a survey of some other reference works issued by Oxford University Press. There are entries about Marxism in such disciplines as law (*New Oxford Companion to Law*), classics (*Oxford Classical Dictionary*), international relations (*Oxford Companion to International Relations*), religion (*Oxford Companion to the Bible*) and science (*Oxford Companion to the History of Modern Science*). The *Oxford Encyclopedia of South Asian Christianity* has an entry on communism. The *Oxford Encyclopedia of Foreign Policy Analysis* has an entry on ‘Marxism in Foreign Policy’. ‘Ideological Criticism’ gets an entry in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*. But in the world of the *OELT*, secular literature has gone so untouched by ideology as not to warrant an entry.

Fredric Jameson is worthy of an entry in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Communication and Critical Cultural Studies*, as are Gramsci, ideology, hegemony, Althusser, and Marxist traditions. There is an entry on Marx in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Martin Luther*; on Marxism in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Philosophy of Education*; on Marxist influences in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the History of Modern Psychology*; on Marxism in the *Oxford Encyclopedia of the Reformation*; on Marx in Oxford’s *Encyclopedia of Semiotics*; on a wide array of Marxist thinkers and concepts in Oxford’s *Dictionary of Sports Studies*. Interestingly, the aforementioned Wiley-Blackwell *Encyclopedia of Literary and Cultural Theory* not only contains a range of essential Marxist entries, it also provides an entry for John Frow, the *OELT*’s editor-in-chief. It is an entry supplemented with pregnant cross-references to ‘Class’, ‘Cultural Materialism’, and ‘Marxism’. Frow’s first book, some thirty-seven years ago, was *Marxism and Literary History*. In this light, what amounts to the intellectual censoring of Marxism from something calling itself an

encyclopedia of literary theory is, on one reading, rather peculiar; on another, probably more persuasive, reading, it is nauseatingly predictable.

‘Inevitably there are gaps in our coverage of the field of literary theory’, writes Frow (p. xxiii). With over 3,000 pages at his disposal, one might observe that any gaps in this encyclopedia are less inevitable than they are in any other. Yet at the same time as it is attempting to erase Marxist thought, this late-born relic of the 1950s blacklists modestly lays claim to an ‘extremely diverse’ range of topics (p. xxiii). One is constrained to observe—not for the first time—that the writ of diversity seems to peter out before it reaches anything radical, and Marxism continues to be the thought whose name others dare not speak. But while the Marxists continue their lonely wait for acts of allyship from their intersectional comrades, the *OELT*’s boastful assertions of comprehensiveness and expertise will ring rather pathetically in the ears of scholars who know the intellectual debts and ongoing practices of literary theory.

The Misprisions of Theory II: Paradox and Dialectic

If the contents and priorities of the *OELT*, well beyond its (non-)treatment of Marxism, speak to a determination to bury the age of high theory, the funeral rites over the latter continue in Elizabeth S. Anker’s *On Paradox: The Claims of Theory*. In this study, paradox is not one among the many things that interests literary critics. It is assimilated to theory itself, and, in the process, becomes emblematic of the sort of politics that takes place at the safe remove of lecture theatres: ‘faith in paradox has been a hallmark of left intellectual life, in particular defining what it means to do theory’ (p. 2). Theory here is, in turn, equated to critique, for ‘the logic of paradox has been indispensable to critique’ and is ‘perhaps its defining technology’ (p. 2). Already, by page 2, paradox has figured as a ‘logic’ and a ‘technology’. To that can be added an ‘epistemology’, a ‘method’, and an ‘analytic mode’ (p. 2). Elsewhere in the book, paradox is an ‘economy’ (p. 112), a ‘grammar’ (p. 113), and an ‘optics’ (p. 137).

While the terms in which this critique is offered vary widely—critique here, in keeping with the wider postcritical tendency, being figured as a bad thing except for when its target is critique itself—that would not necessarily blunt its sting. If the book was framed as an indictment of the tiresome rote formula, cribbed from loosely poststructuralist tendencies, whereby supposed paradoxes (or, more often, a mere rhetoric of paradox) are or were once trotted out—occasionally with interesting results, usually with underwhelming ones—it would surely be correct and render valuable service.

One of Anker's interludes is indeed given over to something of this sort, serving as a paradox-centric 'Brief History of Aesthetic Theory', but it largely omits New Criticism, which, in literary studies at least, inaugurated the fetish for paradox.

If, for reasons that are not quite clear, the origins of paradox-as-doxa are underplayed, Anker also seems to allocate less credit (or blame) to deconstruction than seems its due. Here, however, the reasons are clear, for in her hands paradox looms as a mercurial and protean thing that often bears no resemblance to its deconstructive version. True enough, she does acknowledge that in aesthetic theory 'the many things paradox denotes can sometimes appear a heterogenous jumble' (p. 114). Again, it would not be wrong to highlight the disreputable tendency that has attached to paradox in the form of sheer abuse of the word itself, for, in the hands of its own fans, much of what has travelled under that name has borne no resemblance to the correct understanding of the concept. 'Paradox' certainly belongs in the parade of words and concepts—heteroglossia, reification, ideology, subaltern, irony, aporia, ontology, and so on—that are far too often misused by literary scholars.

But Anker is not out to indict the incoherence of some versions of theory, or the misuses of paradox in the hands of many critics. Instead, she shares the problem of those she critiques. In fact, going beyond the giddiest of paradox's enthusiasts, she sweepingly rounds up all of the following as part of the 'armory' (or 'adjacent properties', p. 30) of paradox: contradiction, ambivalence, dialecticism, indeterminacy (p. 7), antagonism (p. 18), irony (p. 30), seemingly even inconsistency and complexity (p. 71). Elsewhere, singularity, unverifiability, incalculability, untranslatability, and inarticulacy are said to be 'like the logic of paradox [in] often perform[ing] sleights of hand' (p. 121). Anker also includes as 'conceptual cousins of paradox' (p. 132), which thereby become further targets of her critique, speechlessness, unrepresentability, the sublime, autonomy, anti-instrumentality, unpredictability, efficacy, impossibility, rupture and disruption, improvisation, doubleness, polyglossia, ambiguity, pluralism, play, parody, hybridity, and fragmentation (pp. 122–23, 126–27, 130–31). And, finally, it is said that paradox provides the 'vocabulary' and 'unifying creed' for aesthetic discourses that rest upon, inter alia, epiphanies, critical edge, dissidence, double meanings, elusiveness, bounty, exuberance, structure, form, style, and distinctive language (p. 114). Given that it travels under so many and varied guises, it is not surprising that Anker sees paradox as serving so many different roles in literary theory, nor that she finds it everywhere: 'a definitional feature of art, a theme, an objective, a mode,

a structural feature, a method, and a cabalistic religion of (non-)meaning—all together. [...] Criticism goes questing for paradox, but through a method that foreordains its emergence' (p. 137).

With the bullets spraying around like this, it is no wonder that paradox ends up standing as a proxy for an attack on theory *tout court*. And it seems obvious enough that a critique of paradox that rests upon such a vast mischaracterization and so incoherent an understanding of its central category cannot be taken seriously. But *On Paradox* also partakes of the same strange campaign as the *OELT*. Repeatedly—enacting the importance of symptomatic reading even as she writes against it—Anker returns to Marxism in order to insist that, notwithstanding the obvious gulf between dialectic and paradox, the former really is to be swept up in the critique of the latter. It can only be through the grossest misunderstanding, or just bad faith, that 'distan[cin]g Marxism from deconstruction by appealing to the dialectic' is dismissed as 'all too easy' (p. 18). It is easy because the distance is vast and the difference obvious. Nowhere does Anker betray an awareness that, as chapter 1 of Jameson's *Political Unconscious* has explained to generations of undergraduates, the one, if it finds paradox, takes it as a starting point that demands interpretation, while the other treats paradox as its end. Rather, she claims that 'reasoning through contradiction (the usual *métier* of the dialectic) is ultimately cut from the same cloth as paradox' (p. 18). That statement is profoundly wrong in its understanding of the philosophies that it invokes, and one can only surmise that it arises from casual ignorance or simply failing to do the necessary work, which is admittedly difficult. This sort of wilful misunderstanding, more in keeping with an unmotivated undergraduate, is what Adorno must have had in mind when, in *Philosophy and Sociology* (reviewed below), he spoke of 'the very consciousness that shrinks from the Hegelian effort and labour of the concept' (p. 112).

Indeed, Anker writes of 'abandoning the "either/or" logic promoted by thinkers like Theodor Adorno as theory's sole *métier*' (p. 269). It is difficult to name a thinker who less deserves that description. No one who understands dialectical criticism could mistake it for a branch of the paradox industry, and nothing is more averse to either/or logic than the dialectic, which finds its very definition in overcoming such oppositions. Uncannily anticipating from the grave Anker's libel, Adorno insisted upon 'not content[ing] ourselves with some comfortable either/or' (p. 95).

It is one thing to shirk complexity or to be defeated by intellectual difficulty. But Anker's strange, insistent attempt to erase the distinctiveness of dialectical thinking is couched in familiar postcritical terms: 'Noncontradiction, harmony, coherence, stability, unity, clarity, resolution,

perseverance, continuity' (p. 270). And these formulas are beginning to sound alarming, for they seem to suggest a revival of old ideologies of harmonious totality and a reaction so emboldened that it no longer even pays lip service to the negative. Crudely, wherever contradiction would be recognized, it is dismissed as being 'ontologized' in order for Anker to make space for 'agency', her politics of the 'constructive' and 'practical' (p. 311), and 'goods like security, stability, tangibility, and continuity' (p. 286). Somehow, in here, the quietist slogans of postcritique—'perceptual wholeness and abundance and conviction', 'self-presence, integrity, lucidity, and self-ownership', 'fullness and synthesis', 'integrity and integration' (p. 305), 'a mood of adequacy, generosity, capaciousness, and fulfilment', 'tributes to the abundance overflowing in the here and now' (p. 307)—are, as a reading strategy, alchemized into 'practicable proposals for how to act: [...] constructive, serviceable, habitable practice' (p. 305). These slogans are strung together throughout the final chapter to formulate Anker's nebulous proposal of an affirmative, non-paradoxical, 'integrative criticism' (p. 266). As is so often the case, they are thrown around without any example of how they actually work when reading literature. But it is disconcerting how many of them sound like they could have come straight from the seminar of a life coach who has learned to love Big Brother.

Like Anker herself, we have segued from aesthetics to politics. A substantial part of the book is concerned with issues and tactics that are peculiar to American constitutionalism and to its relentlessly identitarian political culture. The wider political argument, however, seems to be that Anker's integrative criticism is going to translate into 'very real material-practical gains' (p. 277), 'real world gains and benefits for real people' (p. 282), 'modest gains' (p. 288), and 'immediately tangible benefits' (p. 289). 'Thralldom to paradox', she writes, has apparently 'stifle[d]' and 'trick[ed]' us into discounting (if not negating) such benefits (p. 288). Here, as well, Anker shares too much ground with the position that she critiques. Her argument against paradox is familiar: as a sort of end point, paradox leads nowhere. It 'foreclose[s] alternatives' and 'induc[es] imaginative enfeeblement, if not full-blown paralysis' (p. 103). '[R]easoning through paradox tends to neutralize constructive, prescriptive, practical statements' (p. 217). In other words, dead ends and paralysis on the page lead to dead ends and paralysis off it, while, conversely, Anker's 'affirmative, serviceable, constructive' (p. 268) version of reading will lead to an affirmative, serviceable, constructive politics. In both cases, however, the relationship between aesthetics and politics is only figured as the most simplistic and rigid homology.

One wonders if anyone seriously believes that this is how the world works. *On Paradox* labours under the illusion—seemingly unique to literary scholars, but also endemic among them—that politics hinges on the obscure scribblings of humanities academics. In a testament to what happens when a discipline forgets a concept like ideology, a breathtaking presumption about the relationship between ideas and power lies behind both Anker's attack on paradox and her solution to it. Even taken on its own terms, the link between paradox and paralysis is wrong. Everyone knows that Septimius Severus had a taste for paradox. So did Winston Churchill. Thomas Jefferson was described as a veritable lover of paradox. In their cases, the fascination with paradox was no hindrance to power and political success. Why should it be any different for the politics of the American centre today?

The Persistence of Dialectical Thought

As foreshadowed in last year's instalment of 'Theory on Theory', there is another way. One of the more salutary effects of dialectical thought is to salvage, from the waste laid by less subtle minds, a more interesting, complex, and certainly more persuasive account of the relations between thought and world than the untheorized and egomaniacal homologies that can masquerade as politically informed literary theory. In Adorno's time, critical remarks about the 'all too hasty identification of theory and praxis that is popular today' (p. 14) were directed at the sort of vulgar reifications that led activists to smash a student's room because he preferred study to rallies (see *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords*, p. 263). One is moved to reflect on how far we have come when those same reifications, working in reverse in our own time, have spawned an industry of scholastics who conflate peer-reviewed works of literary criticism with political action.

Philosophy and Sociology is the latest volume in Polity Press's splendid series of Adorno's lecture courses. These works cannot be recommended too highly. The translations are consistently very good, and the scholarly apparatus helpful. For seasoned scholars, pedants, and completists, they are an opportunity to see Adorno trying out in draft form the ideas that would go into his published works. For students, nothing can serve better as an introduction to Adorno's thought. This dense and difficult writer was a different animal in the lecture room: generously paced, somewhat discursive, at times carefully repetitious where the pedagogy required it. If he gave off any of his reputed compositing, it does not come through on the page.

Among other things, the book is a tonic for both sides of the sublated conflict over paradox. Philosophy and sociology are maintained in a state of

tension, but it is always a productive antagonism. Neither is reduced to a function of the other, but the refusal of easy synthesis does not become a sterile and static irreconcilability. Instead, as Adorno sedulously pursues the claims of both philosophy and sociology, what emerges into view is another concept. If, schematically, sociology's attitude to truth can be called genetic (which is to say that truth is historically conditioned) while philosophy's is one of unconditioned validity, we are faced with the demand to deploy and to think through the very notion that neither the *OELT* nor Anker wants to face: ideology.

The ideologies of our own time, as they circulate within the forms of literary criticism that predominate today—identitarianism, techno-determinism, ecologism, the ontologies of bodily materialism—occupy one or other side of the genetic/validity distinction on an undialectical either/or basis. In fact, this is precisely what makes them ideologies. In one respect, Adorno used these lectures in 1960 to reassert, perhaps surprisingly, the category of validity (easily maligned as philosophy's 'timeless truths'). When it had become a commonplace 'that truth exists within history', the dialectical imperative was to remember 'that history itself inhabits truth' (pp. 193–94). We would do well to remember that today, as well, when a tepid historicism (invariably lacking a theory of history) is one orthodoxy that wears the garb of political criticism. If there is to be a critical historicizing of such bad historicisms, its authority can only be founded on the very validity for which Adorno made a plea.

In other words, the reification of which Adorno loves to speak, and which thrives today in the versions of criticism that prefer to forget the dialectic, is a reminder of the constant need for any literary theory worthy of the name to double as a theory of theory itself. It is one thing to theorize praxis, or indeed to historicize theory and call it praxis. It is quite another, harder, thing to remember that thought must not only be measured by the world (the mistake of all the ridiculous claims made throughout the humanities about their practical uses) but must bear the scrutiny of thought itself. The only tradition that heeds this point is the dialectical one. Mary C. Rawlinson (reviewed below) very correctly repeats the point that Hegel himself made: 'the truth is not the result but [both] the result and the process by which it came about' (p. 22). Theory on theory therefore turns out to be little more than a synonym for dialectical thinking. Hence the ongoing and even urgent relevance of that tradition in the face of attempts to forget it.

Another way of putting Adorno's plea for validity, and of reckoning with the continuing force of dialectical thinking, is to remember his biting remark

about the tendency—far more pronounced in our own day than in his—to pose the ‘loathsome question’ of what, in Hegel, ‘has any meaning for the present. [...] The converse question is not even raised: what the present means in the face of Hegel’ (*Hegel: Three Studies*, p. 1). The power of that demand, and of the thinker capable of sustaining it, runs counter to the sort of non-methodology that refuses to accept anything but the adventitious utility or even whims of the moment as the measure of any idea. In a mark of its timeliness, Adorno’s question features in the introductions to both Paul Giladi’s edited collection *Hegel and the Frankfurt School* and *Reading Hegel* by Slavoj Žižek, Frank Ruda, and Agon Hamza. The latter three issue a rebuke of the untheorized, ad hoc presentism that runs rampant today: ‘The distinction between what is alive and dead, especially in the realm of thinking, should never be blindly trusted to be administered only by those alive right now. Being alive does not make one automatically into a good judge of what is living and not even of what it is to be alive’ (p. 8).

Lest anyone follow Anker in seeing the dialectical tradition as monolithic, it is worth pointing out that Giladi locates his collection squarely within the camp of ‘being critically invested with contemporary crisis situations and their phenomenological dynamics’ (p. 15). This, in what I at least read as being broadly contrary to Adorno’s intervention in the name of ‘validity’, targets what Giladi calls ‘ideal theory’ (p. 15). Whether this reflects an adaptation to the changed imperatives of our moment or is an unwarranted concession to the battery of ostensibly ‘embedded’ approaches of our day is a debate that can and will take place. Suffice to say that Giladi’s rejection of ‘a withdrawal from embedded contexts for the purpose of isolated contemplation’ (p. 14) can be set against Hamza’s suggestion that ‘[p]erhaps our time calls for the contemplative Owl, as opposed to the constant compulsion to act’ (p. 160). What can also be said is that Giladi’s provocative opening follows upon a fluent if brief intellectual history of Hegel’s fortunes down the generations of the Frankfurt school that sets the stage well for a stimulating set of essays.

Espen Hammer’s chapter on ‘The Antinomy of Modernism and Anti-Modernism in Adorno’s *Negative Dialectics*’ testifies, among other things, to the importance of treating philosophical categories rigorously and not simply agglomerating (in this case) antinomy with a range of other ideas, all of them handled differently by different thinkers, and lumping them together as an undifferentiated mass of paradox. Hammer shows how a tension between modernist/Enlightenment and anti-modernist/anti-Enlightenment strategies in Adorno’s thought stands unresolved, not as a dead end but as a symptom of an unreconciled modernity in keeping with Adorno’s insistence on the

negative (p. 34). And while Hammer is true to the negativity of Adorno's dialectic, it is impossible not to notice, almost in passing, how in spite of itself this non-totalizing version reminds us of the dialectic's inherent power to be metatheoretical by situating other approaches as moments in its own process—it seems to make sense to identify deconstructive (p. 44), affective (p. 48), and even postcritical (p. 46) inflections in the steps along the way that Hammer traces. His is a lucid and suggestive chapter that shows how genuinely productive—'philosophically *fruitful* and worth paying *sustained* attention to' (p. 48, my emphasis)—is the dialectical approach. This reading of Adorno pays due regard to his Hegelian element as well as to Adorno's still-dialectical attempt to take the dialectic away from Hegel.

Those who believe that ideology has not simply been wished away but continues to be a relevant category of analysis will find blessed relief in this collection. Borhane Blili-Hamelin and Arvi Särkelä foreground the question of ideology in their chapter on 'Unsocial Society: Adorno, Hegel, and Social Antagonisms'. Their insistence on the central category of antagonism is a corrective to the temptation of seeing the idea of contradiction as an analytical dead end. Ideology is equally prominent in Cat Moir's chapter on 'Second Nature and the Critique of Ideology in Hegel and the Frankfurt School'. Not everyone will agree with a version of ideology critique that is so congenial to much-abused ideas of 'the democratic space of multiple interpretations' and 'ethical life' (p. 135)—the bywords of so much bad theory—and there exist schools of thought (dialectical and otherwise) that would see those two categories as among the most pressing targets of ideology critique today, for usually they share with Anker an antipathy to meaningful contradiction. As Agon Hamza's chapter in *Reading Hegel* reminds us, '[a]ntagonisms and contradictions are not obstacles to overcome' (p. 207)—a point that liberalizing and ethicizing readings of Hegel would do well to grapple with. Nor is contradiction to be reduced to a mere methodology or technique. In a formulation that comes up again and again in Adorno's lectures, it inheres in the matter itself.

If theory as a discipline has a dominant methodology, it is that of what Nietzsche called the worst readers, 'who behave like plundering troops: they take away a few things they can use, dirty and confound the remainder, and revile the whole' (*Human, All Too Human*, p. 245). This tool-box approach—presentist, untheorized in its eclecticism, completely inconsistent—is of course how both Deleuze and Foucault described their methodological orientation, and to read Mary C. Rawlinson's superb *The Betrayal of Substance: Death, Literature, and Sexual Difference in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* is to be reminded of how it remains perhaps the most reliable marker

of the gulf between theory and philosophy proper. Nothing could be more anathema to theory in its current state than a book that serves as nothing more than a careful reading of another book. Rawlinson's readers will find no 'using' of Hegel here, let alone the sort of use that throws him into a random salad of theoretical 'tools'. Rather, they will find what our field is sorely in need of—what Adorno calls 'the labour of interpretation, which is labour in an emphatic sense' (*Philosophy and Sociology*, p. 39).

But Rawlinson's reading is, we might say, a determinate one rather than a mere explication. If the work of the *Phenomenology* was done in order to leave phenomenology behind and progress to the purity of logic, she contends that this project was erected on a devious leaving behind of three key issues by Hegel himself. Death, literature, and sexual difference are, for her, the oversights of Hegel's dialectic on its way to the absolute. It is impossible to do justice to these three very different strands of Rawlinson's rich work here. To read her account of Hegel's aesthetic theory is to see again how pregnant were the latter's relatively brief observations on the novel at a stage when it had yet to come of age as a form. In a few strokes, Hegel rendered, *avant la lettre*, a conceptual depiction of the problematic individual of classical realism before that individual was fully realized in its novelistic depiction. Indeed, Hegel's use of that hallmark of the classical novel, *Bildung*, in his aesthetic theory and elsewhere, continues to be relevant to the task of conceptualizing ideology, as shown by Blili-Hamelin and Särkelä's chapter in *Hegel and the Frankfurt School*, which juxtaposes *Bildung* with Adorno's more explicitly ideological category of *Bannkreis*. When Rawlinson comes to the question of sexual difference, her account is both suggestive in itself and, in its treatment of the gendered division of labour, exemplary in how it demonstrates (though it does not pursue this) the improvement that a materialist dialectic was able to make by showing the place, in a properly totalizing scheme, of precisely that which Hegel, on Rawlinson's account, had to leave out.

With theory's current malaise, in which the ideological work of forgetting (*OELT*) goes hand in glove with the ever-quickening iteration of newisms and turns (including the postcritique to which Anker contributes), we are arguably experiencing a bad version of Hegel's absolute. The 'frivolity and boredom' of Hegel's time are not those of ours. In his own day they were the precursors to the 'sunburst' of revolution (*Phenomenology*, pp. 6–7). If we ask what the present means in the face of Hegel, one is much more likely to see it as having affinities with that slogan of liberal triumphalism, the end of history. As Rawlinson puts it: '[t]here will be more history and more art; but these domains are no longer philosophically interesting, as

they can offer no novelty. They can yield only a repetition' (p. xiv). It must be this condition that lies behind the strange concatenation of circumstances mentioned in the introduction to *Reading Hegel*. For, as this review testifies, we are certainly experiencing some sort of 'Hegel revival'. But it is 'one that risks getting rid of all the elements that were considered crucial elements of the "substance" of Hegelian thought that made it once appear too dangerous, crazy, or just tragically metaphysical' (p. 5).

I suspect that the authors of that statement might have had a work like Jason Miller's *The Politics of Perception and the Aesthetics of Social Change* in mind. Boldly ignoring the *Greater Logic*'s famous declaration that 'talk of identity [...] contradicts itself' (p. 360, emphasis in original), Miller sets himself the task of recruiting Hegel as an ally of twenty-first-century American identity politics. 'A revisionist reading of Hegel's aesthetics recommends itself as a firm theoretical foundation from which to reconceptualize both political and aesthetic representations of cultural identity' (p. 222). If nothing else, this is a venture to be lauded for its bravery. What for Anker is a faith in academic politics is, for Miller, a wild enthusiasm for an alleged cultural turn in which 'film (and art more generally) turns out to be a far more significant medium for effecting social change than the traditional channels of public discourse' (p. 6). Perhaps a little unambitiously, a rather straw version of 'traditional' or 'classical' liberalism is the target here, which, even less ambitiously, Miller counters with what one supposes can only be called the neoliberalism of 'politics of difference, recognition theory, multi-culturalist theory, and similar strands of contemporary cultural politics' (p. 16). The word 'recognition' appears in this book about 150 times. 'Redistribution' appears once.

Materialism this is not. Nor is it dialectical criticism. 'I am happy to trade textual fidelity for contemporary relevance', Miller declares in a sentence that would send the Hegelians into conniptions (p. 16). Leaving aside the false dichotomy there, the incongruity between the priority of contemporary relevance and the choice to write academic books is left unexplored, as is the merit of taking of highly dubious cues from the culture industry. 'The Broadway production *Hamilton* is celebrated for director Lin-Manuel Miranda's efforts to stage a musical biography of a white American statesman using only nonwhite performers. Increasingly, audiences demand that Disney films take greater responsibility with the images and narratives of women, Native Americans, or Muslims, and commend *Black Panther* for introducing a superhero into the world of Marvel comics that is not another white man' (pp. 17–18). These hot takes from the culture wars that seem to preoccupy mainstream America help to make sense of Miller's idea of contemporary relevance. They also, according to him, 'imbricate the politics and aesthetics of identity in ways that [...] compel

us to formulate new ways of articulating the relation between art and politics' (p. 18). The relation between both of those and commerce is not something that Miller feels compelled to articulate.

This is symptomatic of what political criticism becomes when it blissfully cuts itself loose of any understanding of materialism or ideology (also a word that appears once in Miller's book). The agenda for reform politics is to be set by Broadway and Hollywood. Casting the hermeneutic of suspicion to the wind, Miller writes affirmatively of 'pop culture [...] crafting collective identity narratives' at the same time as he posits an aesthetic that is as militant as the *OELT* in its erasure of collectivity: 'Works of art ask us: Do I identify with these characters? Do they attract or repel me? Are these circumstances I would embrace or avoid? What would I do in this situation? Do I reject or endorse these emotions, attitudes, or beliefs? Do I value these projects? Does this look like me? Do I behave this way? Is this *my* kind of music? Are these *my* kind of people?' (pp. 104–05; emphasis in original) Here, in the dusk when aesthetic philosophy has merged with the suburban book club, we find yet one more reason for the pressing contemporary relevance of dialectical thought: 'Identity, instead of being in itself the truth and the absolute truth, is thus rather the opposite; instead of being the unmoved simple, it surpasses itself into the dissolution of itself' (*Science of Logic*, p. 360).

If it had not already been done countless times (and debunked in the 'Theory on Theory' chapter last year), this would be the point at which one declares a crisis in literary theory. The insights of dialectical materialism invented the discipline at a time when Marxism was literally synonymous with critical theory. In the age of High Theory, Marxism became one option—and still a major one—among a relative handful of offerings in the theory supermarket. Now, since the proliferation of new turns and theories that broadly date from the eclipse of deconstruction, there seems to be some sort of a push within the new mainstream of literary theory to erase Marxist and dialectical thought altogether. In itself, this move is to be counted as a serious intellectual discredit to the discipline. But by its fruits it promises to do even more harm. At a time when literary criticism is, if anything, even more political, it has lost its most credible theory of politics. When the gesture of historicization has become near-universal, no one has a theory of history. Having once led the humanities in mapping the operations of ideology, theory, by forgetting the very concept of ideology, has come to embody it in sometimes embarrassingly crude forms. To the casual eye these might appear to be paradoxes, but they are not. To understand them, however, and perhaps even to notice them, theory is going to have to remember the same

dialectical thinking that, in being forgotten, has made such misprisions possible.

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