

Adorno

The Culture Industry

**Also available as a printed book
see title verso for ISBN details**

The Culture Industry

'Adorno expounds what may be called a new philosophy of consciousness. His philosophy lives, dangerously but also fruitfully, in proximity to an ascetic puritanical moral rage, an attachment to some items in the structure and vocabulary of Marxism, and a feeling that human suffering is the only important thing and makes nonsense of everything else. . . . Adorno is a political thinker who wishes to bring about radical change. He is also a philosopher, with a zest for metaphysics, who is at home in the western philosophical tradition.'

Iris Murdoch

'This collection of Adorno's provocative and disturbing essays on *The Culture Industry* will introduce his thinking to a wide readership. The introduction by J. M. Bernstein shows that Adorno's voice is potentially the greatest challenge to the debate over postmodernity, exposing its social and political collusions.'

Gillian Rose, author of Love's Work

Theodor W.

Adorno

The Culture Industry

Selected essays on mass culture

Edited and with an introduction
by J. M. Bernstein



London and New York

First published 1991
by Routledge

First published in Routledge Classics 2001
by Routledge

11 New Fetter Lane, London EC4P 4EE
29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group

This edition published in the Taylor and Francis e-Library, 2005.

“To purchase your own copy of this or any of Taylor & Francis or Routledge’s collection of thousands of eBooks please go to www.eBookstore.tandf.co.uk.”

Introduction © J. M. Bernstein 1991

The copyright for the Adorno papers is as follows: from Theodor W. Adorno, *Gesammelte Schriften*, edited by Rolf Tiedmann, Volumes 8 & 10 © Surhkamp Verlag 1972, 1976; Volume 3 © Surhkamp Verlag 1981

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publishers.

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

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

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

A catalog record for this book has been applied for

ISBN 0-203-99606-2 Master e-book ISBN

ISBN 0-415-25534-1 (hbk)

ISBN 0-415-25380-2 (pbk)

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	vii
INTRODUCTION	1
1 On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening	29
2 The Schema of Mass Culture	61
3 Culture Industry Reconsidered	98
4 Culture and Administration	107
5 Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda	132
6 How to Look at Television	158
7 Transparencies on Film	178
8 Free Time	187
9 Resignation	198
NAME INDEX	205
SUBJECT INDEX	209

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The editor and publishers would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce the essays in this book: Chapter 1, 'On the Fetish Character in Music and the Regression of Listening', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds) *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1982); Chapter 2, 'Das Schema der Massenkultur', in Adorno's *Gesammelte Schriften III. Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1981), pp. 299–335; Chapter 3, 'Culture Industry Reconsidered', translated by Anson G. Rabinbach, *New German Critique* 6, Fall 1975, pp. 12–19; Chapter 4, 'Culture and Administration', translated by Wes Blomster, *Telos* 37, Fall 1978, pp. 93–111; Chapter 5, 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda', in Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (eds) *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1982); Chapter 6, 'How to Look at Television', *The Quarterly of Film, Radio and Television* 8 (3), 1954, pp. 213–35, reprinted by permission of the Regents of the University of California; Chapter 7, 'Transparencies on Film', translated by Thomas Y. Levin in *New German Critique* 24–5, Fall–Winter 1981–2, pp. 199–205; Chapter 8, 'Freizeit', *Gesammelte Schriften* 10/2, *Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1977), pp. 645–55; Chapter 9, 'Resignation', translated by Wes Blomster in *Telos* 35, Spring 1978, pp. 165–8.

viii ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would also like to thank the following: Mr Gordon Finlayson and Mr Nicholas Walker for the translation of Chapter 8, 'Free Time'; Mr Nicholas Walker for the translation of Chapter 2, 'The Schema of Mass Culture'; Peter Dews for his careful reading of Chapter 2 and his many helpful suggestions and Gillian Rose for her comments on the Introduction.

INTRODUCTION

The contentious arguments surrounding the idea of an affirmative postmodernist culture have brought with them a persistent theoretical depreciation of the claims of high modernist art as well as a positive re-evaluation of the character and potentialities of popular (mass) culture. Both of these critical re-evaluations often take the form of a sustained criticism of the cultural theory of T.W. Adorno. Adorno's apparently uncompromising defence of modernist art and his apparently uncompromising critique of mass culture as a product of a 'culture industry' has served the proponents of postmodernism as a negative image against which their claims for a democratic transformation of culture may be secured. In their view Adorno is an elitist defending esoteric artistic modernism against a culture available to all. Equally, by calling for a continuation of the project of artistic modernism and perceiving only manipulation and reification in the products of the culture industry, Adorno's critical theory appears to proscribe the transformation of culture in an emancipatory direction.

While it is certainly true that the cultural landscape has altered substantially in the twenty years since Adorno's death, and perhaps in ways he had not anticipated, our current situation may be a great deal less sanguine than its proponents suppose. Even if some of the historical and sociological details of Adorno's analyses were composed to address