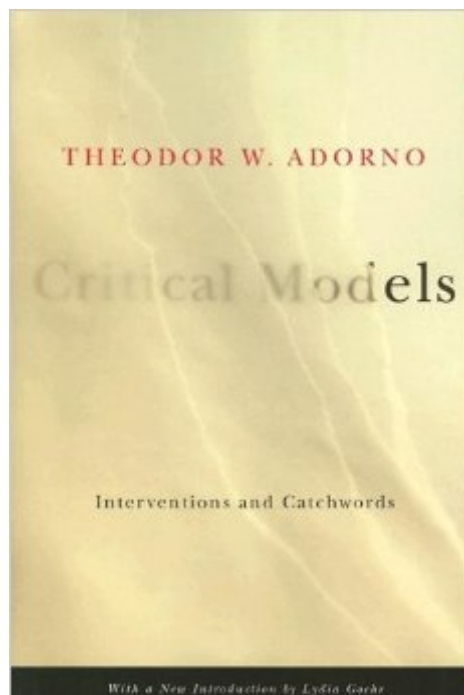


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Critical Models: Interventions And Catchwords (European Perspectives: A Series In Social Thought And Cultural Criticism)



Synopsis

Critical Models combines into a single volume two of Adorno's most important postwar works • Interventions: Nine Critical Models (1963) and Catchwords: Critical Models II (1969). Written after his return to Germany in 1949, the articles, essays, and radio talks included in this volume speak to the pressing political, cultural, and philosophical concerns of the postwar era. The pieces in Critical Models reflect the intellectually provocative as well as the practical Adorno as he addresses such issues as the dangers of ideological conformity, the fragility of democracy, educational reform, the influence of television and radio, and the aftermath of fascism. This new edition includes an introduction by Lydia Goehr, a renowned scholar in philosophy, aesthetic theory, and musicology. Goehr illuminates Adorno's ideas as well as the intellectual, historical, and critical contexts that shaped his postwar thinking.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It is important to point out that Teddie Adorno is spinning in his grave, for the very venue on which I am reviewing Critical Models is itself an example of the fetishized, reified and administered world that Adorno named, and critiqued. However, Adorno's philosophical tradition also includes the catchphrase what is, is right, and would probably view the Internet as more or less a necessary consequence of vast economic forces which it would be simple minded to simply ignore, or negate. And, his "dialectical" logic not only permits us to log on and praise him where praise is due: it requires us to do so. This collection is of essays written after Adorno returned to the Federal

Republic of Germany in the early 1950s. Because culturally Adorno was "very German" and indeed he resented the *Volkische* definition of Germanness imposed by Hitler, Adorno delayed his escape, as the son of a Jewish father and Catholic mother, from Hitlerdom to a dangerous point. He resided briefly in England and somewhat longer in America. Strangely, he did not like England and (given the choice) preferred America, and specifically California, the latter because of its climate. This collection makes it clear that although Adorno was critical of many tendencies in America he was by no means knee-jerk in his criticism. Adorno enjoyed the very real democracy of American life and the very real empiricism of science as practised here...insofar as democracy and empiricism did not become, as a very different sort of emigre might call it, a shtick, or a number: or, as Adorno would call it, fetishized or reified.

The essays in this text were a breath of fresh air after having to read The Arcades Project by Walter Benjamin. I get the feeling that the world of academia is super-excited right now about Benjamin, but I find Adorno to suit my taste much more. In this book you sense that he is not just writing for himself or for others on the same intellectual wavelength - who are familiar with all the philosophical jargon. He is trying to reach out to a broader audience and I really benefited from this effort of his. His work on television in this text is extremely relevant. He basically examines how our relationship with television is not necessarily a case of art imitating life, but life imitating art. (Is television art though?) The culture industry therefore has a lot of power in teaching us how to live and what values to hold dear - but, whose values are they? We spend most of our time at work then we come home switch on the TV, tune in and tune out. But, do we ever really tune out? Does TV reinforce social bonds or does it act as a sad replacement for a sense of community and social engagement that we are denied (paraphrasing Adorno here)? Does TV keep the working man pacified and distracted from thinking about how he is being screwed over on the daily by the system? Is there an observable ideology behind TV program scripts? Why do we enjoy watching TV? Adorno engages very thoughtfully with these questions and more. You get the sense that he really cares about the future of the world and wants people to raise their awareness about the society they are living in by equipping them with the critical tools necessary to address the medias of the culture industry. He shows you how life can be read like literature. There's a lot in this compilation.

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