6

Conclusion

"TRUTH," REASON, AND HISTORY

As I have argued in the preceding chapter, even if, as Habermas and Honneth have maintained, we take the ideals of freedom and equal respect as central to "our" Enlightenment inheritance, then what we can learn from Adorno and Foucault is how we might reaffirm these ideals by radically transforming them from within. To inherit the Enlightenment project is to draw on its tradition of critique but to deploy critique in service of criticizing and undermining Enlightenment's own Eurocentrism and thus its ongoing entanglements with the coloniality of power.[1] This requires first and foremost facing up to the ways in which Enlightenment ideals are entangled with relations of colonial domination and epistemic violence, and not just as a function of their application. As Jay Bernstein puts this point, explicating Adorno: "If the ideals of enlightenment are borne by and/or embodied in practices that are dominating, then the ideals must bear in themselves that dominating moment."[2] For example, the realization of freedom requires the uncovering of the conceptual and normative violence implicit in the norm of freedom itself, such as uncovering how the autonomy of the subject depends on the domination of inner nature or the disciplining of the body or the denial of full subjectivity to those who are deemed wholly Other or abject. Thus the realization of the normative inheritance of the Enlightenment necessarily pushes beyond itself. As Christoph

Menke has argued with respect to Adorno, the realization of Enlightenment morality is simultaneously its transcendence, and only by transcending it can Enlightenment morality be fully realized.[3]

There is a fruitful conjuncture here between Foucault's understanding of freedom, where freedom means freeing thought from what it silently thinks and opening up the space for thinking otherwise, and Adorno's understanding of freedom as breaking the spell of what has come to be second nature for us. Both of these conceptions of freedom turn on the thought that we can best realize our existing normative commitment to freedom by opening up our normative commitments to radical questioning.[4] The result is a more radically open-ended, futural conception of freedom, where we leave open the possibility that there may well be some future in which our own normative commitments and ways of thinking and ordering things will have been transcended, and thus will have come to seem impossibly strange. Methodologically, this open-endedness can be achieved through what I called in chapter 5 a problematizing genealogy that strives to reveal the ways in which our normative commitments are entangled with relations of power and domination. Crucially, such a problematizing genealogy is a way of inheriting the normative perspective of the Enlightenment in the dual sense of taking it up while simultaneously problematizing and decentering it, opening up a space for moving beyond it into an unknown and unknowable future. It is precisely this radical openness and open-endedness that make problematizing genealogy ideally suited for the kind of internal decolonization that critical theory sorely needs, Foucault and Adorno's own personal failings and blind spots on that score notwithstanding.

If critical theory starts from the basically Hegelian thought that reason is historically and socially situated, then it follows that critical theory itself, as a rational enterprise, is also so situated. Fully facing up to this insight, however, means following Foucault and Adorno in historicizing the notion of historicity: acknowledging that the very idea that knowledge is historically and socially situated emerges and rises to prominence in a particular philosophical and historical context, and that this context is marked by the convergence of progressive, developmental, Eurocentric theories

of history and colonial structures of power. Viewed from this perspective, Fredric Jameson's famous dialectical slogan "Always historicize" becomes curiously problematic.[5] As Chakrabarty argues, however, what is problematic is not the *historicizing* but the *always*, for it is the latter that evinces a failure to acknowledge the extent to which historicization itself remains bound up with History, thus, with Eurocentrism.[6]

However, once we endorse this historicization of historicity and of History, then the best methodology for critical theory cannot be that of a normative or rational reconstruction that aims to vindicate "our" late modern Western point of view. This is so even if we incorporate what Honneth has called a genealogical proviso into our conception of critique, where genealogy is understood as providing a metacritical standpoint that allows us to see how our normative ideals go wrong in practice. Critical theory needs both a different understanding of genealogy and a more robust role for genealogy so conceived: a different understanding from that envisioned by Honneth and McCarthy, both of whom equate genealogy with subversive genealogy, and thus assign it the highly circumscribed role of showing how our normative ideals and principles get entangled with power relations when they are applied in the real world.[7] This latter way of understanding the role of genealogy rests on a problematic normative/empirical or ideal/real dichotomy that presumes that the normative can be purified of power relations. Genealogy is not simply subversive and its role in critical theory should not be confined to the metacritical moment that tells us how our normative ideals go wrong in practice. A more productive conception of genealogy understands it as aiming not at the subversion or the vindication of our normative commitments but rather at their problematization. On this understanding, the reconstruction of the immanent normativity of historically sedimented forms of life and the deconstruction of the power investments—including the imperialist power investments—of those same norms go hand in hand.

The splitting within Habermasian and post-Habermasian critical theory between the ideal, vindicatory, rationally or normatively reconstructive point of view and the nonideal, empirical, power-laden, subversive point of view is tied to another form of splitting,

between the first-person and the third-person perspectives. On this view, the first-person perspective and the project of normative reconstruction go hand in hand: when one engages in normative or rational reconstruction, one takes up the perspective of a participant in the normative world, and when one takes up such a perspective, one has to see the normative principles that guide one's actions as valid and as better than what came before, or else one couldn't see them as reasons for one's actions. Similarly, the third-person or observer perspective is connected to the empirical analysis of power relations. On this view, to call attention to the power-ladenness of our normative ideals and practices is necessarily to take up an objectivating, third-person, observer perspective on the normative world, to show that the norms that we adhere to have their roots soaked thoroughly in blood, as Nietzsche would say, and from such a perspective the rational binding force of norms cannot possibly make itself felt. Even as Habermas acknowledges that a complete social theory must encompass both first- and third-person points of view, he gets a lot of mileage out of such splitting, for the structure of his theory struggles to keep the first- and third-person perspectives wholly separate, and this is precisely what enables him to maintain the fiction that the Foucaultian analysis of power has merely empirical and not normative relevance.[8]

Here again the account of genealogy as problematization offered in chapter 5 presents a methodological alternative to this sort of splitting. What is distinctive and innovative about Foucault's genealogical approach in particular is that he employs what we might call a participant-observer methodology, one that aims to bring these two perspectives on our normative lifeworld more closely together, and to draw on both perspectives simultaneously with the aim of conducting what he once called an internal ethnology of Occidental culture and rationality (OWWH, 293). This internal ethnology takes up a participant-observer perspective on our normative world, situating itself within that normative world and drawing on its normative content while simultaneously viewing it with the detached and objectivating glance of the outsider. The point of this internal ethnology is to problematize that normative world or to make it strange for its inhabitants by revealing the entanglement

of our normative ideals with relations of power. But the ultimate aim of this ethnology is to enable the fuller realization of one of the central values of "our" normative world, in particular, freedom.

Again, there is a fruitful conjuncture here with Adorno, which comes out in Christoph Menke's perceptive reading of the methodology of his critique of morality. On Menke's reading, the critical questioning of morality, for Adorno, involves the self-questioning of morality, and this involves a combination of "external" and "internal" reflection,[9] that is, a combination of what I am calling observer and participant perspectives. Menke calls this combination of modes of reflection the "negative dialectical constitution of morality" (GC, 302). He further argues that this methodology represents the central point of disagreement between first-generation Frankfurt School thinkers such as Adorno and contemporary critical theorists such as Habermas, since the latter sought to develop a "discursive ethical reasoning of morality" in which "morality was to receive a form which might release it from the negative dialectic of self-questioning and self-limitation" (GC, 302). Moreover, along similar lines to my argument in chapter 5, Menke maintains that Adorno's negative dialectical self-overcoming or self-transcendence of morality, which requires the combination of internal and external modes of reflection, is "necessary precisely for moral purposes involving *others*" (GC, 305) in that it is necessary for the realization of solidarity with their suffering. On Menke's reading of Adorno, fully realizing the fundamental impulse of morality, which is solidarity with the suffering of others, requires us to transcend the formalistic conception of morality that we have inherited from the Enlightenment, for this formalistic conception of morality tends to do violence to the Other. Hence, realizing Enlightenment morality means transcending it, and transcending it means realizing it. The negative dialectical, problematizing critique of morality itself is thus "in itself an act of solidarity with the individuals who suffer from the damage of their lives" (GC, 322). In that sense, it is an attempt to realize justice.

When considered in light of post- and decolonial critiques I have discussed throughout this book, Menke's reading opens up the idea that taking up the inheritance of the Enlightenment by transcend-

ing it could itself be seen as a gesture of solidarity with the suffering of the colonized, subaltern subjects who have suffered so much at the hands and in the name of Eurocentric modernity. On this view, the willingness to put "our" Enlightenment inheritance radically into question by interrogating its entanglement with the coloniality of power is a way of taking up this inheritance by decolonizing it, and thus of acting in solidarity with the suffering of the colonized.

UNLEARNING, EPISTEMIC HUMILITY, AND METANORMATIVE CONTEXTUALISM

Central to this attempt to decolonize critical theory as an act of solidarity with the suffering of colonized subjects is the notion of unlearning, which recurs frequently in the literature of post- and decolonial theory. As Walter Mignolo puts it: "The target of epistemic de-colonization is the hidden complicity between the rhetoric of modernity and the logic of coloniality. For critical theory to correspond with decolonization, we need to shift the geography of knowledge and recast it [critical theory] within the frame of geo- and bio-politics of knowledge. Thus, the first step in the grammar of decolonization would be cast . . . [as] *learning to unlearn*."[10] Where Mignolo emphasizes the importance of shifting the geography of knowledge by transplanting theory to the site of the colonial wound, I want to suggest that there are resources immanent to the project of the Enlightenment that, when inherited in a radically transformative way, can be useful for this kind of learning to unlearn. Specifically, as I suggested in the conclusion to chapter 5, the method of problematizing genealogy plays an important role here, by revealing to us the contingency of our beliefs and normative commitments and showing us the ways that those beliefs and commitments have been contingently made up of complex relations of power, domination, and violence.[11] For this kind of unlearning project, the methodologies of normative and rational reconstruction are more hindrance than help, inasmuch as regardless of how willing they may be to acknowledge the contingency of the historical developments that they chart, or the downsides, losses, and regressions that accompany the learning processes that they

identify as developmentally progressive, they nevertheless aim at the vindication of our normative point of view. A genuinely open and open-ended dialogue with colonized or subaltern subjects requires a kind of humility or modesty about our normative commitments and ideals that is inconsistent with these vindicatory narratives. Such an openness and open-endedness require what Chakrabarty characterizes as an openness "to the possibility of our thought systems . . . being rendered finite by the presence of the other."[12] This is a kind of humility or modesty that goes beyond Habermasian fallibilism—the acknowledgment of the fact that we may turn out to be wrong—because it entails an active and ongoing problematization of our own point of view and of our belief in its cognitive and moral superiority.

In the background here is the complicated issue of the relationship between metanormative or second-order and substantive or first-order commitments. This issue has come up several times throughout the book, but so far I have deferred discussion of it; now the time has come to tackle it head on. In chapter 2, I mentioned that Habermas does not always clearly differentiate between the metanormative and normative levels of analysis. However, it seems to me that at the metanormative level he defends a strong notion of context-transcendence, since it is only by doing so that he can maintain that the ideals and forms of life that emerge in European modernity may emerge from a particular context but also transcend that context to attain universal significance. This claim, in turn, licenses the inference that premodern or traditional forms of life are developmentally and cognitively inferior to our own, insofar as they haven't learned something that we now know, which is that their worldview is just that, a view of the world, and not the ultimate truth. But then he attempts to combine this second-order or metanormative claim about context-transcendence with a first-order or substantive inclusiveness or openness to learning from those who don't share our worldview. But I don't see how this can possibly work. It is as if we should say, in our substantive intercultural dialogical engagements: I believe my normative principles and procedures to be developmentally superior to yours, but I'm a fallibilist, so I am open to you convincing me otherwise, on discursive

terms that are set in accordance with my normative point of view. The problem is that I just don't see how such a stance could possibly frame a genuinely open dialogue across lines of cultural difference.

If we give up the strong metanormative claims that Habermas wants to make—claims that I have argued should be given up since they rest on a problematic developmental reading of history—then we could understand the relationship between our metanormative and our normative commitments differently. We could understand ourselves, at a first-order, substantive normative level, to be committed to the values of freedom, equality, and solidarity with the suffering of others, but understand these commitments, at the metanormative level, to be justified immanently and contextually, via an appeal to specific historical context rather than via an appeal to their putatively context-transcendent character. Such a metanormative contextualism offers a better way of instantiating the virtues of humility and modesty that are required for a genuine openness to otherness. As Judith Butler puts it, glossing Adorno, "If the human is anything, it seems to be a double movement, one in which we assert moral norms at the same time as we question the authority by which we make that assertion."[13] In other words, we advance our normative commitments with a fundamental modesty or humility about the justificatory status of those commitments; we recognize that such modesty or humility is necessary for realizing those very commitments, that is, for the possibility of finally becoming human. Indeed, Adorno understood the possibility of progress in the future in precisely these terms: "Progress would be the very establishment of humanity in the first place, whose prospect opens up in the face of its extinction" (P, 145).

As I have argued in chapters 2 and 4, critical theorists such as Habermas and Forst mightily resist this sort of metanormative contextualism about the justification of our normative principles. Even though Forst describes his view as a contextualist universalism, he makes it clear that the theory of practical reason on which his moral theory rests is not a contextualist one, and that his contextualism is confined to the contexts of application of the basic right to justification. I suspect that Habermas and Forst resist

contextualism so strenuously because they think that contextualism about normative justification necessarily devolves or collapses into first-order moral relativism. In other words, they are worried that holding a contextualist account of normative justification requires me to undermine or qualify all of my normative claims as soon as I utter them—to add "but that's just for me" on to every normative validity claim I utter—and thus undermines the very idea of engaging in a discursive assessment of validity claims. But I don't think that this is the case. The key to understanding why not lies in the distinction between the metanormative or second-order and substantive or first-order normative levels, a distinction that is implicit, but only implicit, in the work of Butler, Adorno, and Foucault. Once we draw out this distinction, it will become clear that contextualism at a metanormative or second-order level—that is, contextualism about normative justification, contextualism as a position in moral epistemology—need not entail relativism at the level of our first-order substantive normative commitments.

In order to see why this is the case I think we can usefully draw on some insights from contextualist epistemology, as developed in the work of Michael Williams and Linda Martín Alcoff.[14] In his book *Unnatural Doubts*, Williams develops a form of epistemological contextualism that holds that propositions and statements only have an epistemic status at all in relation to situational and contextually variable factors.[15] Epistemic contexts are differentiated from one another by what Williams calls their inferential structure—namely, what stands fast relative to what, or which propositions are taken to be basic or indubitable within that context. Drawing on Wittgenstein and Rorty, Williams adds the further idea that there is no hierarchical array of contexts and there is no context-independent standard or manner of evaluating the relative merits of different contextual standards. The objects of epistemic inquiry, for Williams, have no inherent, context-independent structure, and to think that they do is to assume epistemological realism. Contra epistemological realism, Williams's inferential contextualism holds that "the epistemic status of a given proposition is liable to shift with situational, disciplinary and other contextually variable factors," and that "independently of such influences, a proposition

has no epistemic status whatsoever."[16] Thus, Williams defends the radical view that there are no context-independent or context-transcendent means by which we can evaluate different contextual epistemic standards, but he also maintains that this does not lead to the skeptical conclusion that we cannot have knowledge. Rather, it leads to a deflationary conception of knowledge according to which even though there may be no context-transcendent conception of human knowledge as such that ties all instances of knowledge together, nevertheless the word "know" can be "embedded in a teachable and useful linguistic practice."[17]

Like Williams, Alcoff develops a, broadly speaking, contextualist account of epistemology but, unlike Williams's, her project is motivated by explicitly political concerns. Alcoff argues that the Hegelian strategy for avoiding foundationalism—a commitment that, as I have argued, both Habermas and Honneth share—doesn't necessarily avoid the problematic authoritarianism of foundationalism if it hews too closely to Hegelian ideas about the superiority of the European perspective. As she puts it, Hegelian epistemology constitutes a laudable attempt to "come to grips with the implications of the historical and social locatedness of knowledge,"[18] but in Hegel's system, all knowledge may be perspectival, but "all perspectives are not equal, and thus Hegelian epistemology instantiates once again the authoritarian perspective characteristic of the Enlightenment" (RK, 206). Thus Hegel's legacy leads to an "epistemology of imperialism" and as such is "only partially trustworthy" (RK, 206). What is needed is a way of coming to grips with the historical and social locatedness of knowledge that disentangles that conception of knowledge from Eurocentric imperialism. Alcoff finds Foucault's account of power/knowledge useful for this task inasmuch as it takes a long list of "discursive and nondiscursive elements—including subject-positions, institutional practices, systems of exclusion, epistemes, and so forth"—to be "operative in the production of knowledge" and thus understands them as relevant parts of our web of belief (RK, 207). Moreover, Foucault does this without ceding the possibility of justification; rather, he understands justification as always "indexed to a context made up of very particular elements" (207–08). Thus, Alcoff roots her account of epistemic justification

in particular historical and social contexts but without buying into the pernicious Hegelian fiction that a particular context—namely, the context of European modernity or Enlightenment—transcends its contextual beginnings and thus constitutes the overarching context against which or in terms of which other contextually rooted standards of justification can be measured.

To be sure, Alcoff's account differs from that of Williams in that she argues for a coherentist epistemology, whereas he contends that coherence epistemologies tend to collapse back into versions of epistemological realism because of their underlying drive toward unifying all contexts into one coherent picture of the world. Some of this disagreement can be chalked up to differences in how each of them understands the term "coherence." For Alcoff, coherence theory does imply an impulse toward unification but, on her version, the drive for unifying our web of beliefs and for eliminating contradictions is not paramount. Rather, on her view, "the need for resolutions is more realistically understood as contextual, arising from specific problems in specific contexts" (RK, 224). That is to say, some contradictions need to be resolved and others don't; some contradictory beliefs can coexist peacefully with one another and others can't; and which ones are which will depend on contextually specific features of the situation. Thus, on her view, we can't know in advance what the limits are on the scope of elements that must be made to cohere with one another within one's web of belief, and even "the claim to have achieved coherence is itself subject to contextual, and therefore coherentist, constraints" (RK, 225). Therefore, Alcoff's coherentist epistemology could justifiably be characterized as a contextualist coherentism.

More important for my purposes than the differences between Alcoff's coherentism and Williams's contextualism are the following points: both views tie justification and knowledge to specific contexts; both encompass not just beliefs and statements but also historically specific, social, cultural, and material conditions and even, for Alcoff, power relations in the scope of relevant elements involved in knowledge; and, for both, knowledge is only possible within a context, and what makes knowledge possible within that context is coherence with other beliefs. For Williams, some basic

commitments are held fast and others are made to rest on that contextually specific foundation; for Alcoff, commitments have to be supported by relations of inference, correlation, or analogy by other elements of the web of belief. But the crucial point here is that knowledge is still possible within these contextualist epistemological frameworks; contextualism about epistemic justification does not entail skepticism or relativism. Both of these views thus contend that a thoroughly immanent and contextualist account of epistemic justification can still yield justified knowledge claims within particular epistemic contexts. In other words, they show, as Alcoff puts it, how one can "account for the historical and social embeddedness of all truth-claims without lapsing into epistemological nihilism" (RK, 13).[19]

Borrowing from and building on these efforts in contextualist epistemology, we can get an idea of how one can be a contextualist about normative justification—that is, how one can accept contextualism at a metanormative level, as a claim about moral epistemology—without thereby undercutting the possibility of normative validity at the first-order normative level and thus collapsing into moral relativism or nihilism.[20] Metanormative contextualism or contextualism about normative validity consists in two claims: First, moral principles or normative ideals are always justified relative to a set of contextually salient values, conceptions of the good life, or normative horizons—roughly speaking, forms of life or lifeworlds. Second, there is no über-context, no context-free or transcendent point of view from which we can adjudicate which contexts are ultimately correct or even in a position of hierarchical superiority over which others. On this view, our normative principles can be justified relative to a set of basic normative commitments that stand fast in relation to them, but because there is no context-transcendent point of view from which we can determine which contexts are superior to which others, those basic normative commitments must be understood as contingent foundations.[21]

Here again we might fruitfully turn to Adorno, who, like Alcoff, links the very idea of a transcendent point of view to authoritarianism.[22] As Adorno puts it: "Transcendent critique sympathizes with authority in its very form, even before expressing any content; there is a

moment of content to the form itself. . . . Anyone who judges something that has been articulated and elaborated—art or philosophy—by presuppositions that do not hold within it is behaving in a reactionary manner, even when he swears by progressive slogans" (PMP, 146). Thus, for Adorno, resisting the pull of the transcendent is itself a moral imperative: "Whenever anyone expects you to deal with something intellectually uncomfortable by asking you to 'transcend' it, just pause and ask by what authority you should do so. If you were to do that, I think that would be an instance of a right action in a wrong life" (PMP, 174–75). Adorno, however, also makes clear that the refusal of the point of view of transcendence does not lead to relativism. In fact, for him, relativism is a pseudoproblem:

> For the positive nature of beliefs, of ideologies, that prevail here and now is not relative at all. They confront us at every moment as binding and absolute. And the criticism of these false absolutes . . . is much more urgent than the quest for some absolute values or other, fixed in eternity and hanging from the ceiling like herrings, which would enable us to transcend this relativism with which, as real living people who are attempting to live decent lives, we have absolutely nothing to do. On the other hand, however, the postulates and values that surface wherever people imagine that they have to overcome relativism are the products of arbitrary acts, things that are freely posited, that are created and not natural, and thus they necessarily always succumb to the relativism they denounce.
>
> (PMP, 175)

Relativism and absolutism are thus correlates, and "dialectical thinking . . . is a kind of thinking that, to express it in Nietzschean terms, would persist beyond that alternative" (PMP, 175). I submit that the kind of metanormative contextualism that I have been sketching here is an example of a point of view that is beyond the alternatives of relativism and absolutism. Embracing this as a view about moral epistemology or metanormative justification is perfectly consistent with endorsing first-order substantive normative principles such as mutual respect, egalitarian reciprocity, openness to the other, inclusiveness, and so forth. It is even compatible

with regarding these principles as universal in the scope of their application, so long as we don't understand these principles, from a metanormative perspective, as justified insofar as they are absolute values that are "fixed in eternity and hanging from the ceiling like herrings."[23] This is why even Adorno's new categorical imperative is a historically indexed claim: it arises out of a particular historical situation, namely, the horror of Auschwitz, and it holds for us in light of that historical situation.[24] Hence, Adorno follows up his critique of metaethical absolutism by saying: "We may not know what absolute good is or the absolute norm, we may not even know what man is or the human or humanity—but what the inhuman is we know very well indeed. I would say that the place of moral philosophy today lies . . . in the concrete denunciation of the inhuman" (PMP, 175). And when he says this, it is significant that he does not say that we know very well what the *absolutely* inhuman is. In other words, what we know very well is not some absolute—objective or morally realist—negativistic ground, but rather a concrete, historically situated, and in that sense contingent experience of inhumanity and suffering.[25] For Adorno, just as for Hegel, there is no unmediated access to things in themselves; rather, our access is always mediated through concepts, which themselves contain the sedimentations of history, social practices, and culture. So Adorno's appeal here to the reality of suffering cannot be indicative of a naïve or straightforward realism or objectivism about moral truths or values. In fact, Adorno appeals to the reality of suffering precisely because the moral impulse of solidarity with suffering is what has been both presupposed and suppressed within the Kantian conception of morality that he takes to be predominant in modernity. In other words, the appeal to suffering or concrete inhumanity as a ground for our negatively framed moral judgments is an appeal not to a set of objective moral facts but rather to the suppressed moment within our own historically conditioned way of experiencing the normative world.

But if we ask the further question of what makes the lifeworld horizon that forms the social and historical context for our normative commitments and principles deserving of our support, and if we have given up the possibility of a context that transcends all

contexts, and if we have problematized the idea that "our" lifeworld horizon is developmentally or cognitively superior to others, then our answer to this question will have to acknowledge that our normative principles and commitments themselves rest on a contingent foundation. There are, however, two important features of the normative horizon of Enlightenment modernity that mitigate against what might seem like the arbitrariness implied by this picture: first, like all horizons, this normative horizon is open and not closed, permeated by and formed in interaction with other normative horizons; second, it takes openness to criticism and reflexivity as normative goals, and hence as a form of life it requires me to be open to being changed, including when that means learning to unlearn. The first feature means that the critical resources of one normative horizon can be and quite often are brought to bear on those of another. Thus, we are not limited to a choice between wholly internal forms of critique in which existing social practices or institutions are measured against the normative ideals internal to the social worlds in which they are situated, on the one hand, and transcendent critique based on context-transcendent standards of justification, on the other. Rather, we can envision "external" modes of critique in which justificatory standards that are held fast in one context are brought to bear on those of another, and vice versa. These "external" modes would be more radical than wholly internal critiques but without appealing to potentially authoritarian notions of context-transcendence as a way of securing their radicality.[26] The second feature means that even when I acknowledge that my first-order normative commitments rest on contingent foundations, this does not lead me to embrace them dogmatically or ethnocentrically because those very commitments require me to be open to coming to see—whether through rational argument or through expressive/hermeneutic insight or through experiences of aesthetic world disclosure—that parts of my normative horizon are flawed or limited in some way. Thus, my first-order normative commitments require—in a further reflexive turn—a metanormative or second-order reflexivity about the status of my own normative horizon.[27] This is, I think, very close to the kind of openness that Chakrabarty invokes when he talks about being open to hearing

what we do not already understand and to having our systems of thought be rendered finite by the encounter with the subaltern.[28]

THE IMPURITY OF PRACTICAL REASON (REPRISE)

Both Habermas and Honneth link the idea of historical progress to the progressive purification of reason from power relations. For Habermas, the progressive rationalization of the lifeworld goes hand in hand with the overcoming of power-laden, systematically distorted relations of communication; despite Honneth's critique of Habermas's account of societal rationalization as having too little to say about the role of social actors in that process, he accepts this basic picture of progress as the process whereby a socially instantiated reason is progressively purified of power relations. In both cases, then, moral-practical progress consists in a socially instantiated reason working itself free of its entanglement with power relations. Although Forst does not present such a historically inflected account of the relations between practical reason and power, he too presupposes the possibility of a practical reason that is disentangled from power relations, and this despite his commitment to viewing practical reason as an actual social practice and his attempt to put first things—that is, the question of power—first.

As we saw in chapter 5, Foucault and Adorno offer a very different account of practical reason and its relationship to power. As Adorno points out, reason is just one thing, such that if reason serves as a medium for domination, then this cannot be neatly cordoned off into a separate strata—the ways in which the ideal of reason goes wrong in practice—but rather must be regarded as an aspect of reason itself. Similarly, for Foucault, the task of critical thought is to accept and to interrogate the spiral formed by the entanglement of power and reason, by the fact that we are fortunately committed to a form of rationality that is unfortunately crisscrossed by relations of power and domination. However, for both Adorno and Foucault, these claims are not about practical reason as such, for both of them doubt that it makes much sense to talk about such a thing. As Foucault put it: "The word 'rationalization' is dangerous. What we have to do is analyze specific rationalities rather than

always invoking the progress of rationalization in general" (SP, 329). Similarly, Adorno endorses what he claims is the "mainspring of Hegel's thought," namely, that "the a priori is also the a posteriori" (H, 3). In other words, the a priori is a historical a priori, and all of our thought forms, including our conceptions of reason, are a posteriori, that is, socially and historically conditioned.[29] This holds not only for what Adorno calls identity thinking, which is a specific mode of reasoning that emerges in its fullest articulation in the Enlightenment, but also for negative dialectics, which offers not an alternative conception of practical reason as such but rather a historically specific mode of resistance to identity thinking—the mode of rationality that predominates in modernity—and to the social and institutional structures that correspond to and reinforce it—the reified social structures characteristic of late capitalism, the culture industry, and so forth. Moreover, since Adorno and Foucault also reject the story of progress as a historical "fact" that has led up to us, they rule out the consoling story that might reassure us that our current conception of practical reason is less entangled with relations of power and domination than what came before—but they do so without, as I have argued throughout, offering an alternative story of decline and fall, according to which reason was purer and less entangled with domination in some mythical past.

These ways of thinking about the relationship between power and reason give us some idea of how to conceptualize practical reason in a way that is attentive to its impurities, its entanglements with power relations, without thereby sliding into irrationalism. The conception of reason that I have in mind can be further elaborated by considering the thoroughly practical and resolutely antifoundationalist account of reasoning as a social practice recently advocated by Anthony Laden.[30] As Laden describes it, reasoning is not the work of deducing conclusions from a set of premises, nor does it involve convincing an interlocutor by means of the unforced force of the better argument; rather, on his view, reasoning is "the responsive engagement with others as we attune ourselves to one another and the world around us" (RASP, 8). Laden understands reasoning as a species of casual conversation, which makes his conception of reasoning thoroughly open-ended; like casual conversation,

reasoning has no end both in the sense that it has no goal and in the sense that it has no end point (RASP, 82). Rather, it is an open-ended, ongoing practice of mutual and reciprocal attunement through which shared spaces of reasons are constructed and mapped. On this account, to reason with others is to issue invitations to take the things that we say as speaking for all of us, as correctly mapping the bounds of our shared space of reasons: "The activity of reasoning is the activity of sharing the world, of attuning ourselves to others within reciprocal relationships" (RASP, 46).

Because Laden construes reasoning as involving the issuing of invitations—as co-constructing and inhabiting a shared space of reasons—rather than the issuing of commands, his account of reason differs markedly from the authoritarian conception of reason defended by Kant and Forst and criticized by Adorno. For Laden, as for Forst, reasoning is a "norm-governed, reciprocal, and revisable activity" (RASP, 77), but reason's authority lies not in its capacity to issue legitimate commands but rather in its capacity for the parties who are reasoning together to remain connected to one another (RASP, 63). By understanding reason's authority in terms of its ability to connect rather than to command, Laden's account "recognizes and respects those with whom we talk and argue in a way that arguing from already established philosophical foundations does not."[31] Thus Laden shows how one might take on board Adorno's critique of the authoritarianism of the Kantian conception of reason while still making sense of Adorno's commitment to reason and to conducting a rational critique of reason. Laden's emphasis on reciprocity, mutuality, and attunement as the point of reasoning as a shared social practice also resonates with Adorno's notion of reconciliation as the nontotalizing, open-ended togetherness of diversity.

Laden's conversation-based account of reasoning can also be connected to the postcolonial critique of the idea of speaking for others that surfaced in my discussion of McCarthy in chapter 1 and to the Foucaultian critique of Forst's account of the space of reasons that I offered in chapter 4. Because Laden's account views reasoning as a species of conversation, it models reasoning as a practice of speaking *with* others in mutual, reciprocal, and

open-ended ways. Although he does describe this as a kind of speaking for others, what Laden means by this is only that through speaking, I am including them in a "we" on behalf of which I speak, and that in so doing I am not only inviting them to accept or reject my claims but also inviting them to speak for me as well. As he puts it: "Acceptance of a reason, then, involves an acknowledgment that we share some, perhaps small, space of reasons. Sharing such a space, however, makes it possible for either of us to speak for both of us, and so we can describe the invitation the reason proffers as an invitation to take another's words as speaking for us as well" (RASP, 15–16). Laden's is thus a fully open-ended, mutual, and reciprocal conception of speaking for, in which "I speak for you by speaking for an us of which we are both members, by saying what I take it we would say" (RASP, 41). Such a stance does not involve treating those for whom one speaks as inferior or incapable of representing their own interests (RASP, 40); to the contrary, it demands a high degree of vulnerability on the part of the speaker, inasmuch as it requires me to allow that "my position within what I take to be a space of reasons can change as a result of our interaction" (RASP, 41).

If reasoning is a social practice, and if our social practices and institutions are structured by relations of power, domination, and oppression, reason will necessarily be entangled with power. To his credit, Laden does not shy away from this implication; in fact, he acknowledges its full force but also shows compellingly how his open-ended, non-authoritarian, non-foundationalist conception of reason can provide a way of thinking through reason's entanglements with power without rejecting reason or putting it on trial. He maintains that we have to take seriously the claims of oppressed or marginalized groups that they are excluded from the norms of reason—the kinds of postcolonial, queer, and feminist critiques of reason that I discussed in chapter 4—inasmuch as such claims make visible how "the very terms in which a conversation proceeds" are "themselves set and structured by inequalities of power, and thus unable on their own to make those inequalities visible and thus to challenge them" (RASP, 128). Here Laden's account is highly attentive not only to how power enables and constrains certain moves within an existing space of reasons, but also to how reasoning practices serve to construct

and modify those spaces in an ongoing way (RASP, 33). Thus, his view goes beyond Forst's in that it enables us to see how power works not only *in* the space of reasons but also *through* its very constitution. However, acknowledging that power works through the constitution of spaces of reasons does not lead Laden to conclude that we cannot or should not reason. Rather, Laden argues, the very claim that the terms of a particular conversation structurally exclude or marginalize some individuals is itself a move within a conversation; thus, a conversation-based conception of reason must find a way to remain perpetually open to such challenges, rather than rejecting them as confused or performatively contradictory. This means that reasoning well demands a particular set of virtues: not only a willingness to make oneself vulnerable and an openness to change, but also a "receptivity to unfamiliar lines of criticism, especially those that may initially seem as if they are themselves incoherent or conceptually confused because they challenge the basis of one's conceptual map" (RASP, 129). Only this kind of radical openness and receptivity can enable reason to ameliorate the distorting and exclusionary effects of domination and oppression. Moreover, precisely because domination, when viewed from above, so often looks like equality, "it is particularly important that those who are privileged by inequalities of power possess and deploy" these virtues of vulnerability, openness, and receptivity (RASP, 129).

Although this way of thinking about practical reason does leave us unable to claim a context-transcendent ground for our normative point of view, it does not leave us with nothing to say when we are faced with those who reject that point of view. Rather, Laden argues that a non-foundationalist account of reasoning as a social practice should rest content with describing our normative commitments not as necessary preconditions that we are forced to accept on pain of being deemed unreasonable but rather as attractive ideals toward which we might aspire (RASP, 44). This is the main difference between Laden's practice-based conception of reasoning and Forst's neo-Kantian conception of practical reason. Laden acknowledges that "to those used to normative arguments that attempt to ground norms on undeniable or unavoidable foundations, the invitation to consider an ideal and find it attractive will seem hopelessly

weak and underwhelming" (RASP, 44), but his account of reasoning as a social practice shows compellingly how we might move beyond the problematic idea of practical reason as such without thereby giving up on reason altogether. And by showing how reasoning can be understood as a radically open-ended practice whose principal virtues are vulnerability, receptivity, and openness to change, he offers an account of rationality capable of facing up to the fact that our form of rationality—like all forms, rooted as they are in social practices and cultural forms of life that are structured by relations of power—is crisscrossed with inherent dangers.

Laden's social picture of reasoning also shows how we might avoid the self-congratulatory temptation to prejudge ourselves as cognitively or developmentally superior to "nonmodern" or "premodern" cultures or forms of life—for example, to African cultures who practice various forms of magic or witchcraft or to Indigenous legal practices—while simultaneously avoiding the slide into relativism. As Laden argues, to take the stance that we are developmentally superior, that "we" now know something that "they" have not yet learned, is to insist that other cultures can only count as reasoning insofar as "there is a way to fit their activities into ours" (RASP, 155). But this way of thinking "is to prepare the way for arguments for assimilating them to our way of doing things, bringing them to reason, civilizing them" (RASP, 156). If, on the other hand, we reject this move, then it looks like we are left with a kind of relativism "that devalues both ways of thinking or doing things: just what we do around here" (RASP, 156). Laden argues that this double bind is itself an artifact of a problematic way of conceptualizing reason as resting on a strong, philosophical foundation or ground, what he calls the standard picture of reason. The trick is to stop thinking of ourselves as developmentally or cognitively superior or capable of reasoning better than those whom we deem to be "nonmodern" or "premodern," and to understand the participants in this kind of intercultural dialogue instead as "two groups, each of which has practices that allow them to share normative spaces within their group, but neither of which yet has the means to reason with the other" (RASP, 156). And the key to learning how to reason across such divides is to adopt the kind of open, vulnerable, receptive, and, I would also say, modest and

humble stance toward our own reasoning practices described above. Importantly, this does not mean that we thereby give up the ability to criticize practices or institutions. As I have argued above, it is one thing to say that someone else is wrong, and another to say that they are backward or primitive; the former claim is compatible with treating the other as a moral contemporary, while the latter is not.[32] As Laden puts it, "Coming to recognize the practices of another group as a form of reasoning is precisely not to foreclose the possibility of criticizing them. It is to recognize the work that may need to be done in order to be able to properly articulate and formulate criticisms, as well as to simultaneously recognize that they can criticize our practices" (RASP, 157).[33]

Laden's anti-foundationalist conception of reason as a social practice that demands openness, vulnerability, and humility finds an echo in the epilogue to Dipesh Chakrabarty's *Provincializing Europe*. There, Chakrabarty argues that the "tendency to identify reason and rational argumentation as a modernist weapon against 'premodern' superstition ends up overdrawing the boundary between the modern and the premodern" (PE, 238). Chakrabarty's point is not that reason as such is elitist. Rather, his point is that it is elitist to equate the "premodern" with unreason and superstition, to fail to see the practices that we deem to be superstitious as themselves instantiating a form of rationality. As he puts it, "Reason becomes elitist whenever we allow unreason and superstition to stand in for backwardness, that is to say, when reason colludes with the logic of historicist thought. For then we see our 'superstitious' contemporaries as examples of an 'earlier type,' as human embodiments of the principle of anachronism" (PE, 238). The challenge that Chakrabarty's work poses is that of thinking beyond historicism without rejecting reason (PE, 249); Laden's non-foundationalist, open-ended, and pluralistic conception of reasoning as a social practice helps us to meet this challenge.[34]

PROGRESS, IN HISTORY

Finally, we can now ask what, if anything, remains of the idea of progress, especially once we have taken on board the contextualist

conception of normative justification and the practical conception of practical reason that I have outlined? Throughout this book, I've attempted to delineate two different conceptions of normative progress—the backward-looking conception of history as a progressive, developmental story that leads up to "us" and the forward-looking conception of the possibility of achieving a more just or less oppressive social world. Taking inspiration from Adorno, I've argued that forward-looking progress with respect to the decolonization of the normative foundations of critical theory can take place only if we abandon the backward-looking story that positions European modernity as the outcome of a historical learning process. In this sense, progress occurs where it comes to an end. At the same time, again following Adorno, there is no inference from the lack of progress in the past to its impossibility in the future; this means that letting go of the backward-looking story about historical progress as a "fact" need not compel us to give up on the hope for progress in the future, though it may well change how we think about what that might mean. In other words, it may be the case, as McCarthy argues, that our politics cannot be truly progressive unless we have some way of conceptualizing what would count as progress in a forward-looking sense, as a moral-political imperative, but it is also the case that our politics cannot be truly progressive if our conception of progress as an imperative rests on a self-congratulatory, Eurocentric story about historical progress as a "fact." Moreover, for the project of decoupling progress as an imperative from progress as a "fact," it isn't sufficient to lace our vindicatory or rationally reconstructive story with an acknowledgment of the downsides, losses, and regressions that have accompanied our historical learning process. Rather, we need to go further and actively problematize our own normative point of view.

To be sure, both of these conceptions of progress, the forward-looking and the backward-looking, rest on normative principles. This follows from the claim that the very concept of progress does not make sense without some conception of a goal or benchmark against which progress can be measured; normative progress, then, can only be measured with respect to some sort of normative benchmark. Thus, whether we identify increases in autonomy

or social freedom as gains that mark modernity as developmentally superior to premodern forms of life or as normative potentials in the present the full realization of which we should strive to attain in the future, we are identifying them as the normative benchmarks against which claims about progress, whether backward- or forward-looking, should be measured. In this sense, the backward- and forward-looking conceptions of progress could be seen as distinguishable only inasmuch as they are distinct temporal references that are indexed to a common set of normative assumptions. If that's right, then one might wonder how much work this distinction between forward- and backward-looking conceptions of progress really does. One might also ask whether my aim is really to disentangle the former from the latter, or rather to undercut the whole idea of normativity that runs through both conceptions or temporal dimensions of progress?[35]

In response to this last question, I want to say: both. As I have argued in chapters 1 through 3, one can distinguish between backward-looking and forward-looking conceptions of progress in the work of McCarthy, Habermas, and Honneth, and, more important, these conceptions hang together in a particular way, such that the backward-looking story about modernity as the result of a historical learning process undergirds forward-looking claims about what would count as moral-political progress in the future. This strategy for grounding normativity emerges from a desire to avoid foundationalism—by refraining from appealing to a transhistorical normative standard or conception of rationality—while also avoiding historical relativism—by identifying a historically emergent but still developmentally superior set of normative standards. It is also rooted in a desire to avoid problematic forms of utopianism, as evidenced by Habermas's critical remarks about utopian socialism and Honneth's appeal to the impotence of the mere ought objection to Kantian morality. The thought here is that critical theory runs the risk of becoming overly utopian unless it identifies normative potentials that are present in existing social reality, potentials on which we can build in order to make progress in the future. But, again, if we are to avoid historical relativism, we have to have some reason to think that those normative potentials are themselves worthy

of being built upon, and the backward-looking story of historical progress as a "fact" steps in to play this role. In this respect, McCarthy's, Habermas's, and Honneth's positions are distinct from Forst's, since he identifies a normative foundation—the basic right to justification, which is rooted in his conception of practical reason—that can justify both forward- and backward-looking conceptions of progress. As I have argued throughout this book, both of these strategies are problematic from the point of view of post- and decolonial theory, though in somewhat different ways, and my argument is designed to challenge both. The combination of problematizing genealogy as central to the methodology of critical theory and the related metanormative contextualism that I advocate undercuts any sort of normative foundationalism and replaces it with a contingent, context-immanent normativity; in that sense it should undermine our faith in certain kinds of strong claims about progress, whether backward- or forward-looking. This means that if we are to hold on to the idea of progress as a forward-looking moral-political imperative, that commitment will have to go together with a relentless and ongoing problematization not only of any and all judgments about what would constitute progress but also of the normative standards by which such progress could be measured.

The same goes for the distinction that I made in the first chapter between historical progress and progress in history, which is also bound up with the question of normativity in complicated ways. As I have used these terms, "historical progress" refers to a transhistorical claim according to which the transitions between different historical epochs or time periods can be understood on a model of sociocultural learning or progressive development. In its strong form, this notion appeals, explicitly or implicitly, to an ahistorical normative standard against which transhistorical claims about progress can be measured. Thus, the strong version brings us back to the problem of normative foundationalism, discussed above. "Progress in history," by contrast, refers to improvements within a specific domain and measures those improvements by appealing to standards that are themselves historically and contextually grounded. In chapter 3, this distinction was further complicated through my discussion of Honneth, who can be interpreted as

defending a medium-strength account of something like historical progress "for us," where the claim about historical learning or progress across different historical epochs is indexed not to an ahistorical normative standard but rather to a set of contextually grounded normative commitments. As I argued in chapter 3, although this conception of historical progress is conceptually coherent, it cannot do the kind of metanormative work that Honneth needs for it to do, and it also remains vulnerable to the political objections raised by post- and decolonial theorists.

So, this leaves us with progress in history. As I have said before, in order to make judgments about progress, all that we need is some sort of benchmark or standard against which progress can be measured. Thus, my contextualist conception of normativity not only leaves room for progress as a forward-looking moral-political imperative; insofar as it articulates normative standards at all, it makes possible backward-looking claims about progress as well. In that sense, the backward- and the forward-looking conceptions of progress can never be fully disentangled, for as soon as one articulates a normative standard of any sort, one can use it to make judgments about what has constituted progress up to now and what would constitute progress in the future. This means that my view would allow one to say, for example, that the expansion of gay rights in the latter half of the twentieth and first part of the twenty-first centuries in Western, postindustrial democracies constitutes progress in history, where progress is understood in terms of the fuller realization of certain normative commitments that we take to be fundamental—for example, equality—and is not linked to any sort of claim about whether the historical form of life in which such normative commitments are embedded is developmentally superior to pre- or nonmodern forms of life. Still, as my discussion in chapter 3 of gay marriage shows, we have to be very cautious even about such locally and contextually grounded judgments about progress in history, precisely because the tendency to self-congratulation can be so seductive and so dangerous for a critical theory that aims to reflect on its own investments in relations of power. Thus, even our local and contextual judgments about progress in history, whenever we feel compelled to make them, must be ongoingly and relentlessly problematized.[36]

CODA: CRITICALIZING POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

The charge that postcolonial theory is unable to ground its own critical perspective because it remains mired in irrationalism and relativism is by now a familiar complaint.[37] Indeed, given post-colonial theory's intellectual roots in postmodernist or poststructuralist theory, this charge should not be at all surprising, since it is a charge frequently leveled against postmodern theorists as well.[38] In closing, let me say a few words about how the approach laid out in this book and particularly in these last two chapters might be useful for responding to such charges. The metanormative contextualism that I have defended shows how postcolonial theory could be grounded in a thoroughly immanent normativity that enables its capacity as critique, thus allowing it to avoid relativism, without appealing to developmental readings of history, which would endorse Eurocentrism, or to strong foundationalist conceptions of normativity, which would end up in authoritarianism or informal imperialism. The anti-foundationalist, open-ended, and pluralistic conception of practical reason discussed above shows how postcolonial theory can reject the notion of practical reason as such as overly abstract and formal—thus, again, as imperialist in its very form—but without opening itself up to the charge of lapsing into a romantic over-valorization of superstition, magic, and myth.[39] Finally, the local and contextual account of progress in history shows how postcolonial theory might articulate some sort of normative benchmark for what might count as progress in the future—thus accepting a version of Forst's claim that one can be against progress only by being for it—but without appealing to the problematic readings of history or abstract conceptions of normativity that the theory rigorously criticizes. In these three ways, I hope that this book shows what postcolonial theorists might stand to gain from the kind of encounter with the Frankfurt School tradition of critical theory that this book attempts to make possible. That is to say, I hope not only to have showed how critical theory can and must be decolonized, but also to have given some indications of how postcolonial theory could be criticalized.

Side of Western Modernity; Scott, *Refashioning Futures*; and Young, *White Mythologies* and *Postcolonialism*.
64. See Young, "Foucault on Race and Colonialism."
65. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 1.
66. For a helpful overview, see Nichols, "Postcolonial Studies and the Discourse of Foucault."
67. Stoler, *Race and the Education of Desire*, 5.
68. Young, "Foucault on Race and Colonialism," 57.
69. Hammer, *Adorno and the Political*, 5.
70. Gibson and Rubin, "Introduction," 14.
71. See, for example, Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia*; Goswami, "The (M) other of All Posts"; Patke, "Adorno and the Postcolonial"; Spencer, "Thoughts from Abroad"; Varadharajan, *Exotic Parodies*; Vázquez-Arroyo, "Universal History Disavowed."
72. Goswami, "The (M)other of All Posts," 105–106.
73. Ibid., 108.
74. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 6.
75. See, for example, Spivak, CPR, 309.
76. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 94.
77. See especially Mignolo, "Delinking."
78. Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, 36.

6. CONCLUSION: "TRUTH," REASON, AND HISTORY

1. On a related note, see Alcoff, *Real Knowing*, 205.
2. Bernstein, *Adorno*, 238. For a related argument, see Schweppenhäuser, "Adorno's Negative Moral Philosophy."
3. Menke, "Genealogy and Critique," 321–322.
4. Paradoxically, or at least counterintuitively, this might include being willing to question even the commitment to freedom itself, at least where this is understood as freedom as autonomy. I take it that something like this is the motivation behind Mahmood's *Politics of Piety*. For interesting critical discussion, see Weir, *Identities and Freedom*, chap. 5.
5. Jameson, *The Political Unconscious*, 9. For a related discussion, see Young, *White Mythologies*, chap. 6.
6. Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*, 111.
7. Critical theory also needs a different conception of genealogy than the basically vindicatory conception endorsed by Habermas; on this point, see Allen, "Having One's Cake and Eating It, Too."
8. On this point, see Allen, "The Unforced Force of the Better Argument."
9. Menke, "Genealogy and Critique," 302. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the text as GC.

10. Mignolo, "Delinking," 485.
11. Again, on the importance of both contingency and complexity as aspects of genealogical critique, see Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique*.
12. Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, 36.
13. Butler, *Giving an Account of Oneself*, 103.
14. There are some subtle differences between their views, which I will discuss briefly below. But, for my purposes, these differences are less important than their shared commitment to a nonrelativistic, nonskeptical contextualism about epistemic justification.
15. Williams, *Unnatural Doubts*.
16. Ibid., 119.
17. Ibid., 113.
18. Alcoff, *Real Knowing*, 205. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the text as RK.
19. Another place where Alcoff and Williams differ is on the question of truth. Alcoff attempts to offer a coherentist account of truth that provides an alternative to metaphysical realism and Williams gives a more deflationary account of truth as semantic but sees his contextualism as compatible with metaphysical realism. But this isn't relevant for my purposes because I follow Habermas in thinking that when it comes to the normative domain what we aim for is not truth but rather normative validity or justification. See Habermas, DE.
20. For a related attempt to develop a metanormative contextualist position while avoiding relativism, but one that draws on a Wittgensteinian-pragmatist reading of Rawls, see Laden, "The Justice of Justification" and "Constructivism as Rhetoric."
21. See Butler, "Contingent Foundations." The approach described here could also be understood as a version of what Nancy Fraser and Linda Nicholson once called "Social Criticism Without Philosophy."
22. On the need to resist epistemic authoritarianism, see also Cooke, *Re-Presenting the Good Society*.
23. On the compatibility of contingency and universality in normativity, see Koopman, *Genealogy as Critique*, chap. 7.
24. On this point, see the excellent discussion in Freyenhagen, *Adorno's Practical Philosophy*, 136–141.
25. Compare Freyenhagen, who claims that Adorno's negativism is objective. See ibid., 197ff.
26. See Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification*.
27. Here my view comes very close to Laden's radical Wittgensteinian reading of Rawls. See Laden, "Constructivism as Rhetoric."
28. Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity*, 36.
29. On this point, see Bernstein, "Negative Dialectic as Fate," 40.
30. Laden, *Reasoning*. Henceforth cited parenthetically in the text as RASP.

31. Laden, "The Practice of Equality," 124.
32. For a related account, see Zerilli, "Toward a Feminist Theory of Judgment."
33. In this way, I think that Laden's social picture of reason fits together quite well with Boltanski and Thévenot's sociology of critique, inasmuch as both views envision the possibility of critique across spaces of reasons or orders of justification without appealing to some overarching conception of reason or justification as such that unifies all of these spaces or orders or assembles them into a hierarchy. See Boltanski and Thévenot, *On Justification*; and my discussion of their work above and in chapter 4.
34. I also think, though I don't have the space to go into it here, that it does so in a way that is preferable to the Heideggerian approach that Chakrabarty himself sketches out in *Provincializing Europe*, 249–255.
35. Thanks to Kevin Olson for pressing this point.
36. Thanks to both Dick Bernstein and Kevin Olson for pressing this point.
37. For a recent and forceful version of this criticism, see Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*.
38. A particularly influential version of this critique of postmodernism in critical theory is Habermas (PDM).
39. This suggests a way of responding to the reverse Orientalism charge; see, for example, Chibber, *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital*, 288–290.