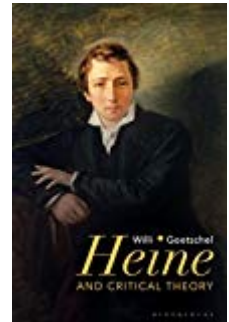




Willi Goetschel. *Heine and Critical Theory*. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019. xii + 311 pp. \$114.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-350-08729-3.



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Especially in the anglophone world, there has been a monumental revival of interest in Kantian and post-Kantian German philosophy, in particular in Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, but also Johann Gottlieb Fichte, Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling, Friedrich Schiller, and others. This revival has also prompted interest in figures who at first glance may not appear to conform to the strictures of the discipline of philosophy, most notably, say, Novalis and Friedrich Hölderlin. For the most part, this has not been the case for Heinrich Heine, whose reception has been adversely affected by the present, often deep disciplinary divisions between German studies, philosophy, and Jewish studies. I mention all of this to praise Willi Goetschel's book, and to highlight its ambitions.

I think it is possible to say that this is one of the most comprehensive and powerful accounts of Heine's philosophical significance published in English. Goetschel approaches this task largely by showing deep connections between Heine and the tradition of Frankfurt school critical theory, under-

stood primarily through the work of Theodor W. Adorno, but also Walter Benjamin, Max Horkheimer, and Leo Löwenthal. Along the way, Goetschel also confronts and elaborates the ways that Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud engaged with Heine (and all three are figures who are central for this tradition of critical theory—this is especially the topic of chapter 2).

The book thereby accomplishes three main tasks. First, it sets out to show the deep, philosophically rich significance of Heine's work. Second, it shows how connecting his philosophical moves with those of later thinkers (whether those who influenced the Frankfurt school or the Frankfurt school itself) reveals how indebted those thinkers are to Heine, and also how much more philosophically rich their own projects become. Third, Goetschel is also able to show how moving between these two settings allows us to get a better grip on the very project of modernity, wherein "modernity becomes the site for working out the antagonism between the old the new" (p. 21) and where Judaism is central to the project of modernity.

ty, so that “a universal address” is “made possible precisely by” an “open reliance on the specificity of Jewish experience” (p. 1). In short, this is an incredibly complex undertaking that intervenes in many debates, traditions, and issues, both practical and theoretical. That the book succeeds in doing so is a testament both to Heine’s thought and to the sophistication of Goetschel’s approach and acumen, which has also been apparent throughout all of his earlier work. Because the book is so rich, I will focus my comments on a brief summary of the book’s argument and on one issue that arises due to the argument and approach of the book. On the whole, I want to say right away that this is an incredibly welcome and successful book, and I hope that it will bring more deserved attention to Heine and to Goetschel.

The book’s first chapter opens with a sort of intellectual history of how Heine was taken up by New York intellectuals and thereby Frankfurt school critical theory. This is a very welcome and well-executed chapter that lays the groundwork for the rest of the book, but it also peripherally raises an issue for Goetschel’s approach here. Namely, in invoking the entire NYC milieu, Goetschel also invokes Arendt’s engagement with Heine and this raises a question about the parameters of “critical theory.” Of course, the Frankfurt school is a relatively well-defined cadre of thinkers, but the moniker of critical theory is broader and at times applied to Hannah Arendt and others (such an extension to Arendt is also at times vociferously rejected, as, for example, by Idit Dobbs-Weinstein in *Spinoza’s Critique of Religion and its Heirs*, published in 2015). For the most part, this is not how Goetschel uses the label as he limits it chiefly to the Frankfurt school, but this question of where Arendt stands is important philosophically—this is a point to which I will return.

The second chapter examines Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud in order to show their deep engagements with Heine and his sizable influence on all of them and their projects, while the third chap-

ter returns to Heine himself, exploring his use of dissonance and his aesthetic project while unpacking it in terms of Adorno’s own use of dissonance and its cognates. The fourth chapter builds on all of these themes with a discussion of language in mind, terminating in a discussion of the motif of the nonconceptual in Heine, especially in his engagement with Hegel.

This chapter leads to the book’s fifth and most impressive chapter which forms the backbone of the book and orients itself around Heine’s conceptualizations of history. It is a fascinating chapter that shows deep resonances of Heine in both Benjamin and Freud, in particular with respect to their conceptions of history, of both nonsimultaneity and return (Freud), and also the monadic (my term via Benjamin) nature of every historical event as having its own ontological density (Benjamin). As Goetschel highlights, quoting Heine, “in the world’s history every event is not the direct result of another; all events rather exert a mutual influence” (p. 153). Chapter 5 leads to a chapter on the affects (chapter 6) and a chapter on secularism (chapter 7) before bringing us to a conclusion around Heine’s *Rabbi of Bacharach*, which Goetschel uses as a means to return to all of the themes of the book.

As I mentioned, in many ways, the pinnacle of the argument of Goetschel’s book is found in chapter 5, which concludes with the idea that “for Heine, history, temporality, and the temporal relations of future, past, and present, are no longer categories with a priori definable form or content, but the dynamic sites of critical renegotiation” (p. 192). I think that Goetschel’s book does a fantastic job of showing how this is the case and of pursuing so many different strands—past, present, and future—about the significance of this claim.

At the same time, I also think that there is one missed opportunity, namely an engagement exactly with the way Kant and German idealism have been taken up in contemporary anglophone philosophy and beyond. For example, Goetschel

shows how much of Heine's conception of history (like Benjamin's and Adorno's and also Arendt's) can be seen as a rejection of a certain understanding of Hegel's conception of history as teleological or progressive (pp. 139-143). But Hegel's conception of history, as has been argued most recently by, for example, Terry Pinkard in *Does History Make Sense? Hegel on the Historical Shapes of Justice* (2017), perhaps was not as "totalizing" as Goetschel and Heine suggest. And the same is true, it seems, of Hegel's philosophical apparatus, as has been argued since Robert Pippin's *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (1989). If that's true it would have been interesting to perform the same procedure on these contemporary readings of Hegel and on Heine's reading of and engagement with Hegel, bouncing between the two—and between the way in which (Frankfurt school) critical theory engages with Kant and Hegel—in order to see what might be revealed by such mutual interpretation (or in this case, it seems triangulation). This point also implicitly brings us back to Arendt, whose engagement with Kant and Hegel is also complex and which could have been triangulated in the same way to add a greater depth to the conception of "Critical Theory" in the title.

Of course, I want to be clear: this is already a long book, and doing what I suggest might have been prohibitive with respect to space. At the same time, I do continue to think that it remains a desideratum, as doing so will be a way to further the uptake of Heine in the philosophical world. Undoubtedly though, Willi Goetschel's excellent new book offers a sophisticated move in that project, located here around the Frankfurt school.

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