Nihilism and faith

Rose, Bernstein and the future of Critical Theory

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In a succession of books the late Gillian Rose and Jay Bernstein have sought to defend and elaborate upon the Adornian inheritance both within Critical Theory, contra Habermas,[1] and beyond Critical Theory, contra post-structuralist and postmodernist thought.[2] In these works, Rose and Bernstein are clearly engaged in a shared project and present a common front to the philosophical world. The central features of this shared project are a commitment to the method of immanent critique, genealogy and phenomenology without historical completion, as a means of rescuing lost forms of knowledge, political wisdom and ethical life. Their aim is to trace the historical roots of the deformation of reason, as it is reflected in modern/postmodern social theory, jurisprudence, politics and aesthetics, in order to open up new ways of resuming the values of classical theory (i.e. the Platonic–Aristotelian *praxis* and *phronesis*) within the present. However, this work of recovery is tempered by the recognition that the deformation of reason renders impossible the direct expression and reinstatement of these values. Accordingly, they conceive Critical Theory to be an essentially negative and aporetic project: its task is to narrate and explain the deformation of reason as it is reproduced and reinforced in the human sciences from the standpoint of an expanded notion of rationality, while remorselessly criticizing as hopelessly utopian all attempts, including its own, to transcend in thought the limitations that deformed reason imposes in actuality.

However, in the *Broken Middle* (1992),[3] Rose implicitly departs from this shared consensus with Bernstein. The most immediate expression of this change in orientation is Rose's explicit criticism of Adorno, which builds upon and further elaborates the critique of negative dialectics stated in her 1987 paper 'From Speculative to Dialectical Thinking: Hegel and Adorno' (which would have been more aptly subtitled 'Rose and Adorno').[4] In addition to the critique of Adorno, *The Broken Middle* introduces two innovations not contained in Rose's first three works. First, drawing heavily on Kierkegaard, it advances, embraces and defends a notion of faith. Second, Rose switches the axis of genealogical origin from the Greek polis to the Talmudic Judaic community. Rose's motivation for this changed point of departure is two-fold: first, to show that faith is a necessary condition of love without domination in personal relationships; second, to demonstrate in opposition to Christian dogmatics that grace is not opposed to law but is the means of its deliverance. The genealogical function that Talmudic Judaism is made to serve in *The Broken Middle* is the idea of a post-sacrificial, ethical community, conceptually prior to the Christian separation of love and law and the modern diremption of law and ethics, and yet mediated by tradition and reason and thus open to history. Rose then reconstructs the fate of modern Judaism from the standpoint of this fictional community to show how modern Judaism and Jewish secular thought re-present the broken Talmudic mediation and how this in turn is a consequence and expression of the antinomies of modernity as a whole. Rose situates herself within the text as the 'single one' who must negotiate the 'breaks' between the universal (the modern state and the discourse of human rights) and the particular (religion and ethnicity). This engagement is pursued through an immanent critique of Christian and Judaic political theology, psychoanalysis, anthropology, political theory and literature. In this extended narrative, the Marxist dimension of the first phase of her work almost completely drops out of the account. Rose in effect abandons her earlier project of a Hegelian Marxism in favour of a Kierkegaardian Hegelianism.[5]

Bernstein, on the other hand, has continued to pursue the project as originally defined. The most comprehensive expression of this to date is his magisterial reconstruction of Adorno's ethical thought,

Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics (2001). In this work, Bernstein presents a detailed interpretation and reconstruction of Adorno's 'ethical' texts – *Minima Moralia*, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and *Negative Dialectics* – abstracting their central propositions and reconstructing them within the context and language of recent post-analytical philosophy. On the one hand, this violates Adorno's philosophy, his express insistence on the unity of philosophical form and content and the necessity of the use of modernist forms of literary expression to resist the assimilation of its content to the forms of traditional theory. Bernstein in effect systematizes Adorno's anti-system by integrating it within his own field of concepts and categories. This would be relatively innocuous if Bernstein was merely offering an explication of Adorno's thought, but he goes beyond this limited ambition to seek to 'press Adorno's thought into a form that enables its fuller appreciation and ideally its further extension and elaboration'.[6] Bernstein offers no self-reflection on his own philosophical style, nor does he appear to notice that the transposition of Adorno's speculative discourse into the philosophical register of contemporary post-analytical thought stands in need of justification. By contrast, Rose in *The Broken Middle* remains faithful to the spirit of Adorno in respecting his requirement to find a literary form adequate to a speculative discourse in the very act of repudiating the letter of his thought.

On the other hand, Bernstein undoubtedly succeeds in rendering Adorno's ethical thought more perspicacious. Taking Adorno as his constant point of reference, he delivers a devastating critique of Kantian constructivism in epistemology and ethics, before going on to present a powerful analysis of 'Auschwitz' and its sources in modern instrumental reason and the impossible necessity of assimilating it to our ethical self-understanding. He concludes with an outline of his own independent moral argument for an 'ethical modernism'. Bernstein's 'ethical modernism' is a vision of ethical socialism as unrealizable yet residual in the present. This vision has negative and positive aspects. Negatively, it demands resistance to the domination of the abstract over the concrete, the dead over the living or the reduction of living beings to the status of mere things. In short, it calls for resistance to the reifying tendencies of capital and 'rationalized' reason. But since reification is an all-pervasive feature of modern social life, we are all implicated in reifying structures and practices, so we can never be sure exactly what would count as an effective protest against reification rather than a means of reinforcing it. The critique of capital therefore does not necessarily legitimate

an anti-capitalist politics. Positively, however, ethical modernism is grounded in the free acknowledgement of human dependence on nature. Therefore it does demand an ethic of solidarity with living beings in their animal vulnerability and with the environment. It requires a reinstatement (practically, not just theoretically) of the ethical values of caring, sympathy, pity and compassion in the face of their erosion by instrumental reason and rationalized moral norms.

In this article, I shall attempt to show that Rose's 'break' with Adorno also represents a departure from the common project she shared with Bernstein. I shall analyse the roots of their divorce and seek to mediate their reconciliation. The split between Rose and Adorno has more than local significance; it returns us to issues that go to the very foundations of Critical Theory both in its historical formation in the inter-war period and its theoretical origins in the Hegelian aftermath. I suggest that the reconciliation of Rose and Bernstein allows for a more inclusive notion of Critical Theory than that to be found in Adorno and Horkheimer and opens up the possibility of a different, more positive, response to the problem of nihilism in modernity.

The article is divided into three parts. In the first part, I set the scene for a critical dialogue between Rose and Bernstein by first outlining Adorno's reading of Kierkegaard in *Kierkegaard: The Construction of the Aesthetic* (1932) and then proceeding to an assessment of Rose's refutation of Adorno's interpretation in *The Broken Middle*. In the second part I bring Rose's *The Broken Middle* and Bernstein's *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* into critical dialogue with one another to show how their divergent conceptions of ethics are mutually incompatible with one another. My aim here is to demonstrate that Rose's fideism and Bernstein's ethical socialism, as it were, fail towards one another. In the third part, I draw out the wider implications of the separation between Rose and Bernstein and the possibilities that their reconciliation would open up for Critical Theory.

Kierkegaard's pseudonyms

Adorno's *Kierkegaard: The Construction of the Aesthetic* established the style and much of the content of his mature philosophy.[7] It is therefore no accident that Rose should elaborate on her 'break' with Adorno by explicitly challenging his early reading of Kierkegaard in *The Broken Middle,* and implicitly throughout the work as a whole. I shall first summarize the main thrust of Adorno's immanent critique of Kierkegaard before going on to detail Rose's response to it.

Adorno claims that 'Kierkegaard's realm is ruled by logical immanence'. The pseudonyms that Kierkegaard deploys are not 'living bodies' but cyphers of a pre-conceived dialectical schema, albeit skilfully disguised by the author's 'geniality of presentation' and 'irony of method'. Unmasking this artifice calls for a two-step mode of interpretation: first, the pseudonyms are situated within the dialectical schema, and second, certain key words and metaphors are singled out for particular attention, as they 'reveal what the dialectical scheme seeks to conceal', namely its excess materiality.[8] The precipitates of the critical process turn out to be a constellation of interrelated concepts: the 'interieur', 'melancholy', 'mourning', 'despair', 'image' and 'myth'. What these terms ultimately disclose is the isolation of Kierkegaard as a solitary (and economically parasitic) intellectual entrapped in his own self-woven world of semblance. But the constellation also serves as an allegory of a redeemable reality beyond illusion.

Perhaps the central concept at work here is Adorno's notion of the 'mythical'. Interspersed throughout his reading of Kierkegaard is an account of the genesis of myth, which draws heavily on Benjamin. For Adorno, the mythical element is a mimetic representation of an undifferentiated natural state in which desire and the desired are found in unity. The image is produced by means of the recollection of the original dream-state. Thus, 'myth' is a fusion of past imagery and present consciousness. The bourgeois 'interieur' is an example of the 'arrangement' of the products of such recollected 'proto-historical' images in the present.[9] Yet, for Adorno, Kierkegaard is only correct up to a point in maintaining, following Socrates, that when consciousness (the idea) recalls the dream, the mythical is reconstituted in a new form 'as image'; for that is merely the undertow of the 'idea', not the 'authentic' image. Here Adorno is holding out for a notion of the 'image' that is not simply the dialectical obverse of recollection but one that remains faithful to the content of the object recalled even as it is partially occluded in the act of recollection itself. This leads him to assert that the 'most authentically mythical' is recollected 'when the image startles up what has been from the caverns of pre-history'.[10] Adorno further underlines this point when he states that 'natural being is dialectical in itself',[11] meaning that the object retains its own integrity over and above the constructive activity of consciousness.

Adorno aims to demonstrate that Kierkegaard's 'system' conforms to Hegel's idealistic logic, with the 'stages' of the aesthetic and the ethical mirroring the categories of being and essence, and the 'religious' supplanting the concept. Consequently, it too remains within the realm of the mythical. The only difference between Hegel and Kierkegaard is that Hegel's concept encompasses 'transcendent being', while in Kierkegaard's final 'religious stage', 'immanent consciousness' reaches its ultimate limit. Therefore, according to Adorno, Kierkegaard represents the culmination of the history of German idealism no less than Hegel; both thinkers seek and fail to find a means of escape from the solipsism of modern self-consciousness. The final stage of 'immanent consciousness' is the romantic or Fichtean 'I', in which the opposition between ego and non-ego falls within subjectivity itself. As a result, the 'I' can only relate to the products of its own imaginary self-positing and not to the object as it is in itself. For Adorno, Kierkegaard personifies the isolated romantic ego trapped in its own immanent subjectivity that has grown melancholy having attained insight into the inner negativity and illusory nature of its own form-giving activity. The source of this insight is then dramatized as a 'collision' with the 'Absolute paradox':

a coming into relation with that which is absolutely other to itself. Consumed by guilt for its own presumption to absolute autonomy, consciousness then sacrifices itself as an act of propitiation to the unknown (God) in the belief that it has thereby accomplished the 'ontological reconciliation' of spirit and nature, for in the dialectical schema nature does not appear except as spirit. But it deceives itself; the belief that spirit has absorbed nature into itself is an illusion, and the self-immolation of the spirit is only a mythical propitiation that remains entirely within the orbit of semblance. Having 'volatized' itself, consciousness lives on in a state of 'objective despair'.[12]

For Adorno, then, Kierkegaard promotes a 'theology of sacrifice'.[13] On these grounds, he charges him with being the Antichrist. True Christianity, Adorno informs us, aims at 'reconciliation' and not at 'the nameless execution of the paradox'. In calling for the 'mythical sacrifice of reason', Kierkegaard remains at the level of natural religion superseded by Christianity. Furthermore, Kierkegaard's 'paganism' substitutes an illusory 'hope against hope' for a genuine worldly hope in a *possible* future. His 'mythical sacrifice of reason' places an obstacle in the way of genuine ontological reconciliation by precluding the 'enigmatic step that leads out of mere nature by remaining within it' and where, 'free of resignation,' nature/spirit 'perseveres as desirous instinct and eloquent consciousness'. This reconciliation is to be accomplished not through sacrifice, but precisely through the renunciation of sacrifice. Ontological reconciliation therefore is redemption from sacrifice, in which 'sacrifice disappears'.[14]

In *The Broken Middle*, Rose takes up the cudgels against Adorno, on behalf not of Kierkegaard, but his pseudonym Climicus, *de silentio*. Rose enters two main objections to Adorno's interpretation. Contra Adorno, she maintains that a reading of Kierkegaard must begin with the 'pseudonyms' and not with the 'schema'. Rose's central protest against the 'tradition of Kierkegaard interpretation' (including Adorno's reading) is that it has consistently conflated the biographical author Kierkegaard with his pseudonymous narrators, and it has therefore failed to attend to the specificity of the pseudonymous texts themselves. The key to Kierkegaard's pseudonymous authorship is 'systematic illusion' and its aim is to present an authorship without authority. It aims to re-educate the overeducated in the way of faith. This cannot be done directly since no one person can make another free.[15] Human authorities necessarily breed dependencies. The author must, therefore, relinquish authority in order to release the reader to assume it.[16] And she

can only do this by ironically withdrawing behind a mask or veil of facetiousness. Rose therefore insists that in reading Kierkegaard we excise all reference to the biographical author, for it is 'the authorship which confesses, not the confession that gives rise to the authorship'.[17] Indeed, Rose contends that even when Kierkegaard writes under his own signature it is intended as a 'heteronym' – a fictitious persona. In what follows, I shall endeavour to respect scrupulously these strictures in my reading of Rose and Bernstein, where I shall be doing some impersonating of my own, with a touch of facetiousness too.

For Rose, Adorno's refusal to risk undergoing the play of dramatized illusion enacted within the Kierkegaardian corpus by schematizing it in advance represents a further instance of his propensity to judge the dialectic rather than surrender to its speculative movement. This is her first objection. The second is that Adorno 'has so dedicated his own discourse to the *idea* of "sacrifice" that he utterly misses the point that nothing is sacrificed; and that no sacrifice ever occurs in *Fear and Trembling*'.[18] Both Adorno and Rose are therefore dedicated to a philosophy of redemption without sacrifice or resignation, but as we shall see they seek it in opposite directions.

Rose's insistence on the priority of the pseudonyms in Kierkegaard's texts reveals the Socratic intent of *The Broken Middle*. The Socratic problem in its Kierkegaardian form is 'how to further the passion of *faith* of another whose *erotic* passion one has aroused and attracted to oneself'.[19] As we have seen, the answer is by adopting a persona, or rather a series of personae, in order to educate the desire of the cave dwellers. In *The Broken Middle*, Rose becomes an actress, impersonating many authors (Kierkegaard, Hegel, etc.) with the aim of bringing the reader in relation to her own 'plenitude' so as to release her for freedom and love.

For Rose, faith in an omnipotent creator is a necessary condition of (being able to) love. Only an omnipotent creator can love freely without demanding love in return.[20] Absolute or unconditional love between adult human beings is mutually destructive for it requires a total surrender of two selves to one other. Such an absolute mutuality is not sustainable; almost inevitably it must give way to an asymmetrical relation of (relative) dominance and subordination. One human being cannot love another absolutely and freely. Only if one feels oneself to be loved absolutely and unconditionally *prior* to entering into the erotic relationship is one able to love absolutely and freely: to risk loving without the guarantee that one will be loved in return.[21] And such an absolute sense of one's essential desirability

can be attained solely through faith (in an omnipotent, all-loving God). Rose, however, stresses that the God relationship is one that we can never fully achieve but must ever 'fail towards'.[22]

This is the substance of Rose's reading of Kierkegaard's rereading of the Biblical story of the binding of Isaac in *Fear and Trembling*, as it were, 'shot through a pistol' (i.e. stripped of its labour, difficulty and aporia). Following Kierkegaard, Rose stresses the fact that Isaac was not sacrificed; that at the last moment an angel intervenes to stay Abraham's hand and Isaac is set free. But Rose also points out that (in contrast to the master–slave dialectic, which fictionally enacts the beginning of natural self-consciousness), Abraham risks not his own self but that of his son. And, although Abraham, as it were, gets Isaac back, he does not get him back for him*self*; rather Isaac is returned to him as the promise of the future of Israel. In sum, Abraham so trusts that God loves him (that he is loved absolutely) that he is able to let Isaac go. In Rose's speculative phraseology, 'violence-in-love' (exclusive love) gives way to the 'love-in-violence' (surrendering the beloved), which marks the transition from 'being loveable' to 'love-ableness,' the capacity to love, suffer loss and not despair but risk loving again. For Rose, therefore, faith is not predicated on an act of self-renunciation or self-sacrifice. As Kierkegaard sought to demonstrate through the four different versions of the Akedah he relates in *Fear and Trembling*, only Abraham's undeviating trust in the providence of the outcome qualified him as a 'knight of faith' rather than a 'knight of infinite resignation'. Faith requires a form of self-relinquishment based on the opening up of the whole self to that which is beyond it, rather than an act of self-repression or a ritualized form of self-abasement. To employ Kierkegaard's metaphors, faith is not like swimming against the tide (which is the mode of resignation), it is not a striving, but more akin to a 'mysterious floating'.[23]

Another way of saying that nothing is sacrificed in the act of faith is to say that nothing is exchanged. Abraham does not have faith in order to get Isaac back; he simply has faith – and Isaac is returned. It may be objected that regardless of Abraham's religious psychology, an exchange has indeed taken place. In return for staking his fidelity, Abraham not only receives Isaac back but also secures the divine election of his nation. Anthropologically speaking, the (greatest possible) quantitative sacrifice is recouped as (the greatest possible) gain in identity.[24] However, it is not possible to abstract from the inward disposition of the religious believer and still hope to understand the nature of faith. This is why anthropological and sociological accounts of religious belief become reductive once they go beyond analysing the social functions and effects of religious values to speculate on their truth content. From the point of view of an anthropology or sociology of religion, what matters is not the truth of the religious beliefs themselves but the sincerity with which they are held en masse. The truth or otherwise of the religious disposition itself is a philosophical and theological concern not a sociological question. The traditional language used to describe religious experience is complicit in sustaining this confusion, in so far as many of its central concepts, such as 'guilt', 'conversion', 'redemption', 'staking oneself', 'losing'/gaining oneself back, and so on, are invariably couched in economic terms. This makes it almost impossible *not* to understand faith as involving some form of exchange. However, a faith that understands itself in such terms is self-disqualifying. Although it would seem that, Kierkegaardianly speaking, a would-be believer already knows, as it were, this side of the 'paradox' – that if she takes the 'leap' she stands to 'lose' her sinful self and to 'gain' a new, redeemed, self – in fact she knows neither of these things. A knowing faith is a contradiction.

The only analogy that I can think of which really captures the supra-economic nature of faith is that of gambling. Although the analogy has previously been deployed by apologists for fideism, most notably Pascal,[25] it usually incorporates faith into an exchange model in order to meet the sceptic on her own grounds. These analogies fail, however, because they take their exemplary gambler to be a prudent gamester who carefully calculates the odds. The proper analogy is with the reckless gambler who stakes everything on a whim. Everything tells her she will lose; but she nonetheless fully expects to win. Yet her motivation for playing is only nominally to win the pot; inwardly she is not interested in winning per se. She has already forsaken all her worldly goods in the act of placing the bet and that will remain the case even if she gets back tenfold their value. The random act of placing the bet represents a decision not to decide, a retreat from willing, a suspension of self. She plays for no worldly reason. Rather, she delivers herself up to the moment of Chance, to Fate, in the confidence that it will smile kindly upon her. But if it doesn't, she will deliver herself up to it again, and again. This is not an expenditure without reserve for the purpose of attaining a higher status. Indeed, it is not really an expenditure of any kind; it is instead an interval of potentiality suspended between grace and damnation.[26]

Gambling is, of course, not faith, but it is analogous to faith. Faith too requires an absolute trust in the 'unknown'. It is this capacity to let go (of oneself) and to trust absolutely in the 'unknown' that converts the 'unknown' into a person (for to place absolute trust in a mere thing is idolatry).[27] In other words, the self-surrender intrinsic to the moment of faith 'finitizes' the 'unknown' (i.e. transforms an abstract relation into a personal relationship) without compromising its absolute alterity (i.e. the hidden God).[28] In faith, the 'unknown' literally comes into being. Faith is the undertaking of an absolute trust. It is absolute in the sense that the 'object' of that trust, which must be related to as a subject, remains constantly unknown (hidden) and hence unchangeable, although the relation of trust is ever-changing (i.e. it is psychologically, sociologically and historically mediated). Faith therefore necessarily precludes a rational assessment of the evidence for and against there being a God.[29] The risk of faith is not the banal anxiety that it turns out that there is no God (for the presence of 'God' is coeval with faith itself; God goes out of existence when he is not being apperceived), but that of placing an absolute trust in a relative value. Yet, taking that risk, succumbing to it, and overcoming it, is essential to the process of being educated for freedom.

For Rose, however, the education of faith necessarily involves negotiating the always-already historically contingent but prevailing forms of political and legal authority. In particular, Rose contests the Lutheran interpretation of Romans that opposes freedom through grace to the coercion and unfreedom of life under the law, both moral and legal.[30] Rose denies that the law is the antithesis of grace, for it is 'law which arouses power – sympathetic and antipathetic; law which binds and looses, to which power responds against itself or for itself. Law is abundant and abounding: it is not the contrary of grace which tempers its letter with mercy and equity.' Therefore faith involves 'risking out' into a world always already invested in law. The prohibition creates the desire for its own transgression. In the beginning, there is anxiety before the law: faith is an authentic response to this anxiety. However, Rose also contests the corollary of the Pauline understanding of the relation between faith and law, restated by Kierkegaard in *The Concept of Anxiety* to the effect that the 'profound tragedy of Judaism' is that knowing only guilt before the law it has no conception of the actuality of sin and consequently the Jew remains in bondage to the law, unable to attain atonement through grace.[31] On this construction, Judaism remains a religion of sacrifice. Rose points out in opposition

to this that 'The Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, was developed *after* the fall of the Second Temple and at the end of priestly sacrifice.' Rose further objects that the Rabbinic Judaism of Talmud Torah is always 'within' the law – 'on the one hand 613 commands, on the other perpetual negotiation of their meaning' – and that therefore the Jewish experience of sin is actual and thus atonement is actual too and 'annually renewable'.[32]

To conclude this section, then, Adorno's interpretation of Kierkegaard is essentially Feuerbachian: consciousness creates a myth, the 'paradox', and then sacrifices itself to its own idol. In response, Rose denies that the 'paradox' is a myth (while conceding that it can only be referred too aesthetically); rather it is the incursion of revelation into representation. Adorno's reading of the 'paradox' as an anti-rational principle to which consciousness sacrifices itself incorporates that which, *pace* Kierkegaard and Rose, exceeds representation and exchange within an economy of exchange and representation. Moreover, he avers that in trading itself in exchange for 'ontological reconciliation', consciousness has sold itself for fool's gold of its own making. The absurdity of understanding faith in such crude economic terms should be self-evident. As Rose wryly observes, by way of a quotation from T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, in Adorno 'there is no place to be like Phlebas, the Phoenician, who forgot "the deep sea swell/ And the profit and loss".'[33]

Hard-hearted judge and beautiful soul

I shall now turn the axis of the discussion from Adorno and Rose to Rose and Bernstein. I shall begin by outlining the areas of convergence between *The Broken Middle* and *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics* before going on to discuss the areas where their contents diverge and enter into conflict with one another.

The central thesis of *Disenchantment and Ethics* is that the domination of instrumental reason over all aspects of social life in modernity has produced an ongoing crisis of nihilism. The manifest symptom of this crisis is an almost universal condition of 'affective scepticism' – a disjunction between values (which no longer have [objective] validity) and ends (which no longer have [objective] value).[34] As a result, the 'material inferences'[35] that connect ethical demands to ethical responses, the very grounds of our practical-rational moral agency, are all but severed. In short, the modern world has suffered an ethical catastrophe. There has been a wholesale destruction of (moral) authority, (moral) knowledge and (moral) experience.

Moreover, the 'moral centralist' theories – utilitarianism and Kantian ethics – developed in response to this ethical vacuum act to reinforce the separation of ethical demand and response that is responsible for the catastrophe in the first place; for both theories require that responses to ethical demands be determined by reference to a universal theoretical principle rather than to perceptible suffering (the violation of the 'auratic uniqueness') of the individual.

The Adornian view of modernity, derived from Weber and endorsed by Bernstein, is also largely shared by Rose. Indeed, Rose's critique of the sociological tradition in *Hegel Contra Sociology* – to the effect that modern Social Theory, in taking its stance on either validity or value, has reinscribed and thereby reinforced the 'diremption of law and ethics' constitutive of modern social life – parallels Bernstein's critique of modern ethical theory in *Disenchantment and Ethics*. The notion of our 'ruined ethical life' also provides the background for Rose's discussions of faith and politics in *The Broken Middle*. Rose repeatedly insists on the need to 'witness' the diremption of the law and ethics in its actuality and its attendant violence, rather than retreat into a private cynicism or seek exile in 'other-worldly' communities. Similarly, Bernstein claims that the response to the crisis of nihilism takes two broad forms: 'hurt' – cynicism, boredom, despair, ressentiment, and so on; and 'flight' – the 'attempt to build a haven of symbolic renewal' in an unredeemed world.[36] However, Bernstein is no more sanguine than Rose about the prospects for alternative communities; on the contrary, they both believe that their fate is to be corrupted within by their opposition to the overly rationalized world without. This is why although, on the one hand, Bernstein draws on virtue ethics and communitarianism to critique Kantianism and liberal political theory, respectively, for being complicit in the destruction of ethical life, on the other hand he maintains that the latter correspond to the reality of our ruined ethical condition (utilitarianism and Kantian ethics are 'ethics for hard times') in a way that the former simply do not. In other words, our ethical situation cannot be transformed simply by exhorting people to change their 'way of seeing'.[37] The root cause of nihilism is located in the categorical and institutional structures of rationalized reason rather than in the pathologies of social agents which are their effect.

Rose and Bernstein therefore see the predicament of modernity in much the same terms. Where they diverge is in their response to it. At first sight, Rose's notion of 'witness' seems broadly in keeping with the 'negative dialectic' position propounded by Bernstein. But on closer examination they turn out to be quite different, indeed diametrically opposed. To bring out these differences, I must first outline Bernstein's reconstruction of Adorno's ethical thought in more detail.

For Bernstein, the destruction of ethical experience is grounded in the hegemony of 'instrumental reason'. Instrumental reason is defined in turn as 'any form of reason that conceives of itself (necessarily falsely) as determined by pure reason itself apart from and independent of its object'.[38] This is the 'principle of immanence' that extends beyond instrumental reason narrowly conceived as means–end technical rationality to incorporate formal logic and mathematics.[39] The main vehicle of instrumental reason is what Bernstein names the 'simple concept', which abstracts from the concrete particularity of objects to classify them under general categories. The operation of the 'simple concept' in science negates the sensuous particularity of natural objects, and so impoverishes the field of experience. Extended into the moral sphere, it likewise abstracts from the moral qualities of individuals as agents to classify their actions as tokens of types. The permissibility of actions is then determined by the test of universalizability, subject to the logical constraints of theoretical reason (consistency and non-contradiction). As a result, theoretical reason supervenes on moral practices. This has a twofold deleterious effect on ethics. First, it renders invalid the (premodern) forms of practical, material inferences that informed factual and ethical responses alike. Second, it creates a problem of moral motivation: why should individuals take a practical moral interest in a theoretical law? As a result, morality has increasingly been reduced to rational procedural rules for the regulation of strangers who are morally indifferent to one another, and ethics has been banished to the private sphere, where it is undermined by its exposure to a disenchanted world. In sum, the critique of theoretical reason consists in showing how reason cannot constitute its objects, and the critique of moral reason consists in showing that the auratic uniqueness of individuals[40] is the ground of moral motivation rather than abstract moral norms.

Bernstein's response to our ethical predicament as he sees it is his notion of 'ethical modernism'. This is not advanced as a theory of ethics, but as a form of praxis. From this perspective, rationalized reason cannot be challenged head-on (the mistake of virtue ethics and communitarianism); instead, it must be subverted indirectly by counterposing the 'complex concept' to the 'simple concept'. The 'complex concept' does justice to the radical independence of the object

through a form of reflective or intransitive judgement (for which Kant's aesthetic judgement is the model) as opposed to the subsumptive, 'transitive', judgement of instrumental reason.[41] But this is not exclusive to the aesthetic sphere; rather, the witness to the violence of instrumentalized reason in modernist art (both epistemically and morally) is itself grounded in the resistance to the denial of violence against the auratic uniqueness of the individual in its animal vulnerability. By not fully subsuming the object under the concept, the 'complex concept' opens up the possibility of new experience. As Bernstein neatly puts it, 'indeterminancy in the concept corresponds to possibility in the object.'[42]

Ethical experience is to be re-enchanted by reactivating the material inferences grounded in the unmediated response to animal/human suffering. It demands that we once again identify with animal/human suffering and be affected by it. The learned moral responses of sympathy, pity and compassion are to be retrieved as the basis of a reflective moral practice. However, Bernstein consistently states that he is not propounding a 'new ethics'. As he puts it, 'Negative dialectics broaches, aims at, reveals the possibility of the regime of the complex concept, but always remains this disenchanted side of it.'[43] The reach of instrumental reason is such that we are all implicated in its violence, big and small. To survive in modernity we have to affect a 'coldness' towards the suffering of others even if we do not feel it (though in many cases it is all too genuine). Thus, we are all part of what Adorno, once more drawing on Benjamin, calls the 'guilt complex of the living'.[44] We must therefore remember the victims of the violence that we are implicated in perpetrating and atone for their injuries with expressions of guilt, regret and remorse. Ethical experience in modernity is now 'fugitive', a relatively rare occurrence.[45] Such fugitive ethical experiences must be celebrated as holding out the promise of an ethical future. Individuals who respond to ethical demands without recourse to rationalized moral norms, but on the basis that they are confronted with a situation that demands an ethical response, may be considered moral exemplars. They are reactivating the (premodern) charismatic authority of making norms that (as in traditional ethics) are 'situationally indexed' to the

(moral) matter at hand. In capturing moments of 'fugitive ethics' and in recovering the forgotten past and reified nature occluded by instrumental reason, ethical modernism is also making 'metaphysical experience' possible again. In sum, therefore, ethical modernism is a form of resistance to the dehumanizing effects of instrumental reason, as it were, from the inside out.

The fault lines between Rose and Bernstein should be becoming apparent by now. Although both share a concept of *Bildung* as a 'teleology without a telos', their respective orientations appear to be going in opposite directions and to have different priorities. For Bernstein, the goal is to chart a 'progressive retreat from mastery over nature to a reconciliation with it'.[46] By contrast, for Rose, the educational intent of her authorship is to bring the 'single one in relation to the absolute'. For Rose, the way to nature (love) is through God (the Law as Revelation); for Bernstein, the way to 'God' (or its placeholder in modernity, 'metaphysical experience') is through nature (response to the auratic uniqueness of the individual in its animal

embodiment). But, in fact, nature in the (intransitive) sense that Bernstein employs the term hardly gets mentioned in *The Broken Middle* or indeed in Rose's other works. Indeed her insistence on the ubiquity of the law would seem to place her in the Hegelian idealist tradition for which it is a case of 'normativity all the way down' in contrast to Bernstein's counterclaim that it is 'dependency all the way up'.[47] It is therefore by no means fortuitous that in the *Broken Middle*

Rose's equivalent of Bernstein's moral exemplars are primarily political actors – Varnhagen, Luxemburg and (the young) Arendt.[48]

For Rose freedom presupposes independence from nature rather than reconciliation with it. This explains the ascetic, one might say Nietzschean, dimension of her authorship with its disdain for self-pity and preparedness to confront the violence of our animal nature as a noble enemy.[49] Moreover, Rose's insistence on the necessity of risk-taking as an integral part of the cultivation of desire implies that being a perpetrator and victim of violence is not, as it is for Bernstein, a regrettable part of modern existence, but inescapable, for which we must continually offer reparation, while (as in Hegel) recognizing it as a necessary means towards the end of freedom. For all these reasons, on Bernstein's account, Rose's rereading of Kierkegaard in *The Broken Middle* can be subjected to essentially the same form of critique that Adorno originally subjected Kierkegaard to in the *Construction of the Aesthetic*. For Rose's account appears to conform to the 'principle of immanence', in so far as it does not fully acknowledge the dependence of reason on its objects. The prime instance of this is Rose's attempt to vindicate the 'paradox' as a means of genuine transcendence that both bestows love on the 'single one' and grants them the power of love-ability. The problem here, from Bernstein's point of view, is that the movement from being loveable to loving others is mediated by a 'form' – the paradox – and this serves to suppress the material inference that would otherwise lead, as it were, directly from the demand for love (charity) to the appropriate response. Although Rose might respond that what is involved here is a 'failing towards form', this would not obviate the objection, for it is the 'form' that is the stumbling block. The additional clarification that the 'paradox' is an aesthetic name for what is essentially unrepresentable, and therefore not a 'form' at all, goes to the heart of the issue here, since from the point of view of Bernstein's naturalism there is no possible object to which it could refer. Ergo it must be an illusory form.

This difference has far-reaching implications for their ethics. To focus this contrast, I shall briefly compare their respective understanding of the notions of love and fidelity. Bernstein, following Adorno's discussion of the subject in *Minima Moralia*, brings out the equivocations of the concept of fidelity in modern marriage. Fidelity as an ethical norm may be enforced in support of patriarchy and its negation may be used to legitimize a shallow emotivism. Since the latter is the prevailing tendency, Adorno argues (and Bernstein

follows him in this), for a notion of 'political love': 'Love means not letting immediacy wither under the omnipresent weight of mediation and economics, and in such fidelity it becomes itself mediated as a stubborn counterpressure.'[50] Bernstein upholds Adorno's thought that there is a case for maintaining fidelity on a voluntary basis when the involuntary moment of love has come to an end, as an act of ethico-political resistance. This is in sharp contrast to Rose, for whom, as we have seen, the imperative is to 'repeat forwards' – to risk the loss of the other, to free the lover (and oneself) to love again. From a Rosean point of view, the Adorno/Bernstein defence of fidelity would appear to be an act of 'infinite resignation'. Conversely, from the Adorno/Bernstein perspective, Rose would appear to be, paradoxically, defending infidelity in the name of faith. Rose's Kierkegaardian notion of love as 'repetition forwards', the constant readiness to love anew, would seem to repeat only the self-deluding romanticism of Kierkegaard himself. Rose would no doubt respond that the judgement of romantic immaturity delivered on Kierkegaard (and by extension her own authorship) serves to conceal the anxiety of her judges. In her defence, she would call upon the distinction drawn by Kierkegaard in the *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* between a lower and a higher form of temptation. The lower form of temptation is the enticement to the pleasures forbidden by the moral law and for which the remedy is virtue; the higher form (*Anfechtung*) is the temptation not to trespass the law, not out of consideration for virtue, but as a means of fleeing from the 'paradox', a temptation which can only be overcome through faith. In the latter instance, the moral category of 'wrong' is transformed into the religious category of 'sin'. It is doubtless true that the profession of a religious faith can be (and frequently is) used to justify wrongdoing. Equally, however, the moral consciousness may embrace virtue so as to avoid the 'spiritual trial' of being a sinner and so experience a crisis of faith. This is the temptation not to be tempted, not to risk, not to live. It is to substitute judgement for action, righteousness for forgiveness. Because both morality and faith can be expressed insincerely, there is ultimately no way of distinguishing their true and false expressions with certainty (even to oneself, although this is not to say that we can have no insight into our true motives). Thus, *Anfechtung* repeats at the religious stage the predicament faced in the moral sphere by Kant's grocer, who has no way of knowing the purity of his intentions.

The dialectic between Rose and Bernstein staged above has a familiar ring because it essentially repeats that between the 'hard-hearted' judge and the 'beautiful

soul' in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*. Bernstein (from Rose's perspective) is the moral consciousness that judges without acting; while Rose (from Bernstein's perspective) is the 'active individual' lost in her own world of semblance, as religious faith can now only be a form of flight. Whereas Rose values desire over need, Bernstein privileges need over desire. For Bernstein, Rose presents subjectivity without substance, the actress lost in her impersonations ('Being Gillian') with no base to return; for Rose, Bernstein presents substance without subjectivity (or a reflexively self-negating subjectivity), dedicated to mourning a world that has failed to notice it has died, whereas in fact it is the mourner who is failing to live.

Rose and Bernstein, R & B, 'rhythm and blues'.

Dialectic of faith

Rose's defence of Kierkegaard's fideism and the adoption of the Judaic model of polity over the classical Greek polis represents a radical departure, not just from Adorno but from Critical Theory as a whole. To see this, we need briefly to place Critical Theory itself in historical perspective. The roots of Critical Theory can be traced back to the immediate post-Hegelian era. Emil Fackenheim concludes his study of the *Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought* (1967) with a coda on the 'Crisis of the Hegelian Middle'. The 'Hegelian synthesis' in which religion and the state are comprehended in their speculative unity was recognized by Hegel himself to be an ideal not an actual reconciliation. The subsequent history of modernity has served to undermine totally the possibility of even an ideal reconciliation. As Fackenheim notes, the religious and the political dimensions of the Hegelian synthesis disintegrated into the seemingly absolutely opposed extremes of Kierkegaard's anti-rational fideism, on the one hand, and Marx's militant atheistic humanism, on the other.[51] From its inception in the 1920s up until the present day, Critical Theory has followed a trajectory in which the orthodox Marxist emphases on Marx's account of economic crisis, class struggle and the seizure of power by the proletariat have been gradually jettisoned, while Marx's accounts of reification and alienation have been retained and fused with a Nietzschean–Weberian account of rationalization and devaluation. On these terms, the central pathology of modern societies is no longer injustice and exploitation but meaninglessness and nihilism.[52] For the most part, therefore, Critical Theory takes it as read that 'God is dead': religion lives on only as the spirit of egoism in civil society, as 'moral religion' or as self-deluding mysticism.[53] As in Marx, the meaning of religious

faith is exhausted by its being understood as either a form of consolation and solace or as a means of protest against injustice and social oppression. For itself, faith is dismissed as illusory. Furthermore, Critical Theory also follows Marx in implicitly assuming that political emancipation from reification and alienation would remove the social basis of religion and that thereafter it would wither away.

As we have seen, Rose contests both these conclusions. In so doing, Rose does not deny the 'secularization thesis' that institutional forms of religion are in decline or conforming to the law of the market; but maintains that, in so far as the ultimate ground of religion is faith in a transcendent reality, the existence of religion transcends its social function. Faith is not an illusion; it is not even a necessary illusion: it is a form of truth. As such, in principle, it is part of the solution to nihilism rather than part of the problem. Bernstein seems to follow the Critical Theory tradition in dogmatically precluding the notion that religious faith provides a basis of ethical motivation and material inference to be 'reactivated' alongside other forms of intransitive understanding. In addition, both Rose's account of faith and Bernstein's notion of 'fugitive ethics' belie their analysis of nihilism as all-pervasive and ethical life as entirely ruined. Rose did not have *a* faith (other than in the sense of a critical conformity to the religious traditions by which she was formed); she simply had faith.[54] Rose's account of faith is not esoteric in principle; on the contrary, it merely articulates a form of religious experience that is common in modernity both inside organized religion and outside of it. Similarly, Bernstein's notion of 'fugitive ethics', as instanced by disinterested, immediate forms of ethical response to the suffering and needs of others, is not so rare as he supposes, as his own examples show; nor are modern subjects so completely devoid of meaning and motivation as he imagines. In short, the sociological assumptions underpinning the account of nihilism shared by Rose and Bernstein need to be re-evaluated because they contradict the affirmative possibilities of faith and hope that they identify in their respective accounts of our 'broken' modernity. This is not to deny that nihilism constitutes the core problem of modernity, or that moral universalism is a contributory factor to the problem (i.e. it is not to side with the Habermasian wing of Critical Theory), but to maintain that there is a social basis for resistance to the nihilistic destruction of ethical life. However, before Critical Theory can begin to reflect on the political forms such a resistance to nihilism should take, it must first restore its faith in modern humanity.

Notes

1. Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno*, Macmillan, London, 1978; *Hegel Contra Sociology*, Athlone, London, 1981. J.M. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995.
2. Gillian Rose, *The Dialectic of Nihilism: Post-Structuralism and the Law*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1984. J.M. Bernstein, *The Fate of Art: Aesthetic Alienation from Kant to Derrida and Adorno*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992.
3. *The Broken Middle: Out of Our Ancient Society*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1992.
4. 'From Speculative to Dialectical Thinking: Hegel and Adorno', in *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays*, London, Blackwell, 1993, pp. 53–64.
5. For a defence of the claim that *The Broken Middle* represents a break with the critical Marxist project of her earlier work, see my essay 'Gillian Rose and the Project of a Critical Marxism', *Radical Philosophy* 105, January/February 2001, pp. 25–36.
6. J.M. Bernstein, *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, p. 39.
7. Theodor W. Adorno, *Kierkegaard: Construction of the Aesthetic*, Minnesota University Press, Minneapolis and London, 1989. See the Foreword to the text by Robert Hullot-Kentor, 'Critique of the Organic', pp. x–xxiii.
8. Ibid., p. 11.
9. Ibid., p. 44.
10. Ibid., p. 55.
11. Ibid., p. 59.
12. Ibid.
13. Ibid., p. 108.
14. Ibid., pp. 120–21.
15. *The Broken Middle*, pp. 13, 9, 82. Rose cites the following passage from Kierkegaard's *Journals* in support of this claim: 'one man cannot make another quite free, because the one who has the power is imprisoned in it and consequently always has a false relation to him who wishes to be free. That is why there is finite self-love in all finite power.'
16. Rose's model here is Kierkegaard. 'Whether at the most intimate "personal" moments in the papers or the journals, or strolling insignificantly in the street – precisely when remaining "what he really is" – the author is masked and middle, always *inter* and *inter*, mediating and vanishing, the reader launched' (cited on ibid., p. 20).
17. Ibid., p. 20.
18. Ibid., p. 14.
19. Ibid., p. 19.
20. Ibid., p. 82. As Rose puts it, 'only an infinite power can make another free without corrupting itself'. This comment introduces the excerpt from Kierkegaard's *Journals* cited above, which continues: 'It is only a miserable and worldly picture of the dialectic of power to say that it becomes greater in proportion as it can compel and make things dependent. Socrates knew better; the art of using power is to 'make free'. But between men this can never happen, though it may be always necessary to stress that this is the greatest good; only omnipotence can do so in truth.' The author therefore must literally play God.
21. Ibid., p. 23. Rose maintains that faith enables 'forward repetition' as opposed to 'backward repetition'. These terms are taken from Kierkegaard's *Repetition*. Rose expresses her point as follows: '[Forward] repetition would be the passage from beloved, loveableness, to love-ableness: from knowing oneself loved, 'loveable' to finding oneself graced with a plenitude of being-able-to-love, and thus to risk loving again and again, regardless of any particular outcome – disastrous or successful. To be love-able: to love singularly, to forgive, to release, and hence to love again and again … such grace needs no words in its passion-action.'
22. Ibid., p. 53.
23. From *Fear and Trembling*, cited in ibid., p. 15. The meaning of faith and its relation to nihilism cannot be stated at all in propositional terms (therefore it cannot be communicated philosophically other than analogically), but it can be inadequately expressed poetically. Take, for example, Yeats's well-known poem 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death': 'A lonely impulse of delight/ Drove to this tumult in the clouds/ I balanced all, brought all to mind/ The years to come seemed waste of breath/ A waste of breath the years behind/ In balance with this life, this death.' W.B. Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, Pan, London, 1974, p. 69. Here nihilism is expressed as the unity of total renunciation of past and present with consummate meaninglessness. It is a form of Stoic freedom, what Kierkegaard terms 'infinite resignation'. Faith is the renunciation of *this* renunciation. But this negation of the negation is not accomplished through an act of will but through an act of self-forgetfulness akin to that which occurs when being reunited with an old and beloved friend. This is not a sacrifice of self but a self-augmentation free of self-regard.
24. I owe this formulation to Peter Nesteruk, 'Ritual and Identity in Late Twentieth Century America', *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 43–69 n56. Nesteruk develops an original notion of 'disjunctive reciprocity' to convey the way a quantitative good may be sacrificed for a qualitative reward in terms of identity-confirmation. Although this results in an expanded notion of the economic beyond merely monetary or barter exchanges, it is nonetheless totalizing in so far as it precludes all supra-economic relations as 'metaphysical', including Bataille's notion of pure expenditure without reserve. The following remarks are intended in part as a response to Nesteruk's position. I would like to take this opportunity to thank him for our stimulating conversations, which have helped me clarify my thoughts on this matter.
25. Blaise Pascal, *The Pensées*, trans. J.M. Cohen, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1961, pp. 155–9.
26. Fyodor Dostoyevsky's *The Gambler* is undoubtedly the greatest literary expression of the dialectic between gambling, faith and nihilism. There are in fact three gamblers in the story and they are all reckless. Although he has renounced the world, the narrator Alexis refuses to risk himself, taking refuge instead in being a petty gambler at roulette; Polina finally risks all but becomes fixated on Alexis and therefore remains at the stage of infinite resignation; the 'Grandmamma' occupies a position halfway between the two other central characters, risking both her faith and her money but retaining both and therefore standing above and below the threshold of faith. The story insinuates the positive concept of faith by, in Rosean terms, showing how its central characters fail towards it.
27. For Hegel, Spirit can only recognize itself as Spirit but this entails overcoming the opposition between religious

consciousness (faith) and the object of faith (God). As Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (trans. A.V. Miller, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, Sect. 681, p. 415): 'The distinction which was made between actual Spirit and Spirit that knows itself as Spirit, and between itself, qua consciousness, and qua self-consciousness, is superseded in the spirit that knows itself as truth; its consciousness and self-consciousness are on the same level.' For Hegel, religious consciousness in the various stages of its evolution towards the 'true religion' of Protestant Christianity either works with an image of God from which it is alienated or else an abstract God to which it can have no relation; in self-consciousness, on the other hand, consciousness recognizes through faith the unknown god is no longer beyond the individual, absolutely other, but the essence of its consciousness as a self, its truth as subjectivity. Hegel and Kierkegaard disagree about how this recognition of spirit by spirit should be communicated philosophically but they are in agreement regarding the dialectical nature of the dynamic of faith itself.

28. Faith is the substitution of divine Eros for natural desire and will. Whereas merely willing to believe in God does not entail that there is a God who exists in whom to believe, truly desiring a relationship with God establishes the God-relationship. This is the meaning of 'truth as subjectivity'.

29. See Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, trans. David F. Swenson and Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1941, ch. 2. Accepting that faith is recalcitrant to rational assessment does not necessarily entail a commitment to an irrational fideism. The possibility of a reasonable form of fideism can be established on the basis of a theological, philosophical, anthropological, psychological, aesthetic and political reconstruction of the history of religion that allows for the distinction to be drawn between true and false forms of religious faith. This is again a task undertaken in their different ways by both Hegel and Kierkegaard.

30. *The Broken Middle*, p. 86. Rose summarizes the reduction of Pauline teaching in the following epigram: 'without law, no sin; without sin, no grace.' This results in the 'anachronistic pitting of law against grace, sacrifice against the law so that "Judaism" is characterized both as a living religion of the law and at the same time as an ancient culture of temple sacrifice … [that] is made to serve a deeper distinguishing of Judaism from Christianity which speciously rededuces the Christian judgement that Judaism is a religion of empty external observance' (p. 100).

31. Ibid., pp. 87, 86, 85.

32. Ibid., pp. 100–101.

33. Cited in ibid., p. 103.

34. *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 6: 'Affective scepticism specifies a situation in which agents can find no good reason, no motive, for pursuing a particular form of practice (intellectual or practical) that can be separated, at least in principle, from the question of the internal coherence of the practice.'

35. Bernstein's account of material inference 'tracks' the account of material inference in Robert B. Brandom, *Making It Explicit*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1994, pp. 168–70. Material inferences are forms of reasoning that are not derived from formal logical rules but are based on the relations between the relevant concepts employed, e.g. 'A is to the west of B, so B is to the west of A. Bernstein adapts this to cases that involve an ethical response: 'from "He is bleeding badly" to "I'll apply a tourniquet"' (*Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, pp. 264–5). The response to injury does not involve a separable descriptive and normative moment; it is a single inference. Bernstein claims that it is the tendential elimination of such material inferences in modern life that is responsible for the disenchantment of ethics, since in the past they were the basis of the 'empirical bonds that connected human subjects'. Ibid., p. 161.

36. Ibid., p. 19 n33.

37. Ibid., p. 78.

38. Ibid., p. 144.

39. Ibid., p. 155.

40. 'Aura is the apprehension of an object in its uniqueness, a uniqueness that is temporally and spatially bound, where the spatio-temporal binding of the apprehension is the condition for preserving its uniqueness.' Ibid., p. 112.

41. Ibid., p. 306. For Bernstein, the complex concept is contrasted to the simple concept in the same way as Kant contrasts the reflective judgement to determinative judgement in *The Critique of Judgement*, viz. 'if the universal (the rule, the principle, the law) is given, then the judgement which subsumes the particular under it is *determinative.… If, however, the particular is given and the universal law has to be found under it, then the judgement is simply reflective.*' Bernstein then maps these two forms of judgement onto a further contrast between transitive and intransitive understanding. Whereas in transitive understanding the object is grasped and understood in a way that is independent of the object, in intransitive understanding the object is understood intrinsically in a way that cannot be directly communicated but only poetically/rhetorically approximated. The transitive understanding of the object presupposes the intransitive understanding of the object as irreducible to both intransitive and transitive understanding. Intransitive understanding's indeterminate grasp of the object is more true to the concept of the object than transitive understanding's determinate and directly communicable but necessarily abstract and partial attempt to comprehend it. Since intransitive reflection guides the operation of the transitive understanding, it is the ground of the latter and not vice versa.

42. Ibid., p. 350.

43. Ibid., p. 359.

44. Ibid., p. 397.

45. See ch. 9, 'Ethical Modernism'.

46. Ibid.

47. Ibid., p. 293. Bernstein takes this thesis from John McDowell and summarizes it as the claim that if 'receptivity can be seamlessly incorporated in the spontaneity of thought', then it follows that 'features of the world can be regarded as wholly within the space of reasons; what is manifest in experience is always already categorically articulated, and thus a component of a meaningful whole.' It must be conceded that Rose's work does not directly address the epistemological questions at stake here. However, her reading of Hegel in *Hegel Contra Sociology* brackets out the question of the relation of Spirit to Nature. The dialectical inversions of the relation between the conceptual and intuitional moments in knowledge are expounded phenomenologically even in the *Logic* as falling entirely within Spirit. To this extent, her reading is closer to the post-

Kantian idealist interpretation of Hegel presented by Robert Pippin (in *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989), which in turn has a similar understanding of the relation between spontaneity and receptivity to McDowell's, than to Adorno's/Bernstein's notion of the non-identical.

48. *The Broken Middle*, ch. 5, 'Love and the State, Varnhagen, Luxemburg and Arendt', pp. 183–246.
49. See Rose's essay 'O Untimely Death./ Death!', in *Mourning Becomes the Law: Philosophy and Representation*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996, p. 135.
50. Cited in *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*, p. 48.
51. Emil Fackenheim, *The Religious Dimension in Hegel's Thought*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1967, p. 241. For an extended comparison of Fackenheim's and Rose's concepts of the 'broken middle', see my essay 'Whither the Broken Middle? Rose and Fackenheim on Mourning, Modernity and the Holocaust', in Robert Fine and Charles Turner, eds, *Social Theory and the Holocaust*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2000, ch. 3.
52. For a discussion and justification of this development in Critical Theory, see J.M. Bernstein, *Recovering Ethical Life: Jürgen Habermas and the Future of Critical Theory*, Routledge, London and New York, 1995. ch. 1, 'Critical Theory – The Very Idea', pp. 10–34.
53. The work of Michael Theunissen is a notable exception in this respect.
54. A full assessment of Rose's relation to Christianity and religion based on her complete authorship must await another study.