“normal” development—would strengthen the readings of the numerous works by Stevenson that invoke powerful desires between men.

Reid pursues her interdisciplinary analysis to the very end of Stevenson's career, concluding Robert Louis Stevenson, Science, and the “Fin de Siècle” with a discussion of Weir of Hermiston (1896). It is refreshing that Reid refuses to read this unfinished novel as "a nostalgic testament to Scottishness" (p. 166), instead placing it in the contemporary context of “fin-de-siècle doubts about progress” (p. 167). By taking the novel out of the familiar contexts—such as the biographical obsession with Stevenson's conflict with his father, Thomas Stevenson—Reid renews our ability to see Weir of Hermiston as at once resonating with Stevenson's other Pacific writing and participating in the late-Victorian skepticism about cultural "progress." The nuanced discussion of Weir exemplifies Reid's sure grasp of Stevenson's heterogeneous oeuvre, and also illustrates the strengths of her innovative and illuminating study.

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In his 1883 autobiography, Anthony Trollope described The Way We Live Now (1875) as a biting satire written to dissect the problems of an age. Although the tone of Amanda Anderson's The Way We Argue Now: A Study in the Cultures of Theory is seldom satirical, her task is nonetheless the Trollopian one of diagnosing a present-day malady. According to Anderson, the combined impact of “the poststructuralist critique of reason and the form of sociological reductionism that governs the politics of identity threatens to undermine the vitality of both academic and political debate” (p. 2). Under such conditions, critics do not so much argue as fail to argue. Yet, though theory's condition is grave, the prognosis that Anderson offers is not without hope. Against the postmortem that Terry Eagleton provided in his After Theory (New York: Basic Books, 2003), Anderson declares theory alive if unwell. While the recent turn toward ethics and affect has brought new vigor to a range of critical projects, theorists remain as reluctant as ever to engage the “practices of rational-
ithy" that Anderson finds compellingly articulated in the work of Jürgen Habermas (The Way We Argue Now, p. 12). Insofar as this collection of multifaceted essays forwards a single argument, it is this: critics’ seeming aversion to the Habermasian defense of Enlightenment modernity is the product of mistaken assumptions about the ethos of rationalist critique.

In The Powers of Distance: Cosmopolitanism and the Cultivation of Detachment (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2001), Anderson’s efforts to recuperate the critical practices of select nineteenth-century writers was inspired by, but not pursued through, Habermas’s theory of communicative ethics. By contrast, The Way We Argue Now has little explicit connection to Victorian literature and a great deal to say about neo-Kantian ethics and procedures. Anderson makes clear that the goal of her book is not merely to assert “the superior explanatory power” of her preferred position, but also, in countervailing fashion, to encourage the “embrace [of] a wider range of political practices, expressions, modes, and moods” (pp. 13–14). If her approach to achieving this “productive tension” between advocacy and open-mindedness varies, then that is partly a result of the book’s multipart structure. Whereas Parts I and II reprise essays first published as far back as 1998, the more concerted analysis of the “way we argue now” appears in the three recent chapters that comprise Part III.

Scholars of nineteenth-century literature will be familiar, of course, with many of the republished essays. But it is worth pausing to describe an impressive corpus that has helped to establish Anderson as one of the most powerful voices in literary studies today. Chapter 1, originally published in Social Text in 1998, reconsiders the mid-1990s debate between Seyla Benhabib’s feminist revision of communicative ethics and Judith Butler’s theory of performativity. Although its main thrust is to “vindicate” Benhabib’s avowed standpoint against Butler’s “ evasion of normative explicitness” (The Way We Argue Now, p. 23), Anderson also argues for an expansion of Benhabib’s position in order to accommodate queer theory’s denaturalizing moves. The second chapter in Part I, which first appeared in Victorian Studies in 2000, claims that literary critics such as Mary Poovey attribute “aggrandized agency” to select historical figures—for example, Florence Nightingale—even as their systemic theorizations of power discount ordinary forms of critical detachment and political practice (p. 60). Part II includes Anderson’s oft-cited essay on cosmopolitanism and universalism, originally a chapter in Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins’s Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1998), and a review-essay, first published in
Diacritics in 1999, in which Anderson contrasts two critiques of postmodernism: Martha Nussbaum's "normative" approach and Satya Mohanty's predominantly "epistemological" alternative (p. 97). Although Chapter 2 is the only one with direct bearing on Victorian subjects, literary critics will find much to admire in these often dazzling, razor-sharp analyses of feminism, new historicism, cosmopolitanism, and postmodern critique.

It is, however, in Part III, "Ethos and Argument," that the volume's distinctive claims about present-day academic culture take full shape. These chapters go beyond exacting critique to explore the provocative thesis about the underlying causes of theory's ills. If critics argue badly or not at all, writes Anderson, then that is partly because an otherwise desirable turn toward ethics and affect has exacerbated the poststructuralist suspicion of reason, amplifying the aversion to Habermasian critique. To be sure, Habermas's work on the public sphere has been highly influential, but, as a largely historicist argument, it has been detached from the project of communicative ethics (p. 140). Thus, while Anderson welcomes "ethos" as an embodied alternative to abstract theorizing, she believes that the term has been narrowly defined so as to emphasize affect and discount reason: "a misleading and unfortunate opposition between ethos and rational argument has become entrenched" (p. 136). As a result, Habermasian critical practices such as strong argument, normative specificity, and procedure do not enjoy the status of ethos. Neo-Kantian rationalism is, as it were, an uninvited guest at the scene of theory's ethical turn.

For Anderson theoretical disagreements alone do not explain this tendency toward invidious opposition between ethos and argument. Rather, academic debate is, she believes, pervaded by unacknowledged investments in "characterology." Characterology may describe critics' appeals to exemplary character traits, as when pragmatists urge an acceptance of postmodern uncertainty that presumes the attainment of an imperturbable demeanor (chapter 5), but characterology may also describe the perceived personal attributes that subvert one's assumptions about a theory's merits. In the clearest example of this thesis, chapter 6 describes the "so-called debate" between Habermas and Michel Foucault in light of its underlying characterologies (p. 139). Whereas Foucault's personality enabled a "charismatic fallacy" in which individual aura forestalled critique (p. 149), Habermas, by contrast, was seen to typify "plodding style, an embarrassing optimism of the intellect, and dangerous complicity with the Enlightenment" (p. 141). The tendency of literary
and cultural critics to dismiss Habermas thus marked what Anderson sees as a worrisome privileging of style over content. Foucault’s dramatic turn from the effects of power on docile bodies to self-heroizing ethics could have created a stimulating rapprochement between theories of communicative reason and practices of the self. Instead, Foucault’s admirers upheld the logical contradictions of his thought as the very definition of ethos (p. 145). Whereas the Habermasian laboring after coherence came to stand for ethos-deficient aridity, the charismatic rejection of formal argument accrued ever more “ethos-bearing” appeal (p. 143). For Anderson this posture of being too cool for school has produced a damaging resistance to exploring “shared forms of rationality” that persists today (p. 2).

Yet practices of rationality might nonetheless be recognized as integral to a desirable ethos. In the book’s final chapter, a fascinating discussion of Habermas in light of Lionel Trilling’s Sincerity and Authenticity (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), Anderson argues that “proceduralism” offers a way to refuse “the false option between reason and ethos” by affirming “the possibility of argument as ethos” (p. 173; emphasis added). Trilling’s distinction between “sincerity” (social conformity) and “authenticity” (creative transgression) anticipates, but also illuminates, the poststructuralist tendency to define ethos against rationality. For Anderson the “richest relation” between these terms is “a dialectical one” (p. 166). When sincerity is understood to entail not only disciplinarity but also “positive” practices such as respectful critique and civic participation, it represents both “a central value of proceduralism” and a necessary supplement to the “negative freedom” that authenticity defines (p. 167). From this vantage, Habermas’s “proceduralist-universalist project” is not, as the emphasis on laws and institutions might imply, ethos-deprived, but rather is informed by a compelling ethos of its own (p. 177). This animating ethos is not a prescribed set of democratic virtues like civic republicanism, but a stoic refusal of ethnocentric self-assurance. Habermas’s rigorous commitment to impersonality thus neither dangerously promotes universal reason nor blindly ignores the “embedded nature of our practices.” It is instead an “anti-ethos ethos” that rejects any “assured sense” of the “self-legitimating” status of “our defining practices” (p. 178).

Clearly, Anderson’s proceduralist ethos is as self-heroizing in refusing partiality as is Foucault’s or Nietzsche’s in resisting rationalistic norms. The difference, however, is that, according to Anderson, the procedural commitment to enlarged horizons is not a purely individual enterprise; rather, in its collective dimension proceduralism’s
ethos is a pro-universalistic "culture that, paradoxically, embeds the practice of disembedding" (p. 178). Thus, as against critiques that seek to supplement proceduralism with the affect and context that it allegedly lacks, Anderson insists that a collective commitment to procedures—e.g., calls for multilateralism in response to the U.S. invasion of Iraq—is already fully authentic: "not the evacuation of history, but an achievement within it, not a draining of affect, but a felt aspiration" (p. 180). Anderson seems to remind us here that the law's dispassionate dispensation is often the very substrate on which the passion for justice thrives.

Anderson's case for argument as "the key collective ethos of proceduralism" (p. 181) is rather more complicated. It represents a nuanced defense of Habermas's notion of an ongoing modern project of universality—one in which fair and democratic procedures are seen to undergird an ethos-rich "aspiration to transcend one's current horizon" through argumentative practice (p. 181). For Habermas pluralism is the merely "interim" condition of a continuing discussion that seeks the "one right answer" to problems of ethics and politics. This strong universalism contrasts with the entrenched pluralism of liberal proceduralists such as John Rawls, the cultural authenticity adduced by communitarian arguments, and the ineluctable difference that underlies many poststructuralist positions. The "one right answer," Anderson explains, is not a coercive device, but rather a "regulative ideal" that "enjoins participants to continue the argument" while refusing to regard their own position as the sought-after answer. In this way, Habermas's universalism promotes democracy by insisting that deliberative process prevail over existing perspectives, enabling "argument as ethos" to "trump identity as ethos" (p. 182). In thus championing a version of universality that, she believes, satisfies the ethical requirement of respect for difference, Anderson illuminates one of the most challenging debates of our day.

Anderson's determination to exemplify a dialectical critical practice in which advocacy is tempered by open-mindedness is most powerful in her astute exposure of Habermasian blind spots: e.g., Benhabib's resistance to "transgressive experimentation" (p. 41) or Habermas's reluctance to acknowledge the importance of "ethos" (p. 154). Nonetheless, the recurrent use of the Foucault/Habermas debate to frame her diagnoses results in occasional foreclosures. Thus, when Anderson describes the charge that Habermas is "ethnocentrically invested in rationality and consensus" as yet another instance of the tendency to define ethos against strong argument (p. 182), she seems to bypass firmer grounds on which to premise such
concerns. As an earlier chapter explains, neo-Kantian universality privileges "principles of respect and reciprocal recognition" that are "derived from . . . communicative practices." Hence, "any cultural practices that fundamentally deny the principles of open dialogue and exchange can be judged without anxious fear that the interpreter has . . . failed to properly respect the other" (p. 102). Critics who worry that ethnocentric bias might condition the articulating of such "principles" and the judgment of "cultural practices" need not, I think, evince characterological prejudice or aversion to formal argument. Indeed, one finds compelling versions of such arguments in recent books such as Saba Mahmood’s *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2005), which critiques the normative presuppositions of secularism, and Wendy Brown’s *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2006), which questions the claim of liberal principles “to be universalizable without being culturally imperialist” (*Regulating Aversion*, p. 170). My point is not that Anderson has no counterarguments to raise against these critics, but rather that each critic exemplifies a vigorous poststructuralist challenge to communicative ethics that is not likely to result in a flabby argumentative culture.

Some of the most interesting engagements with Habermas have been forwarded by feminist critics who, like Anderson herself, seek to place communicative ethics in dialogue with poststructuralist and Marxist insights. Readers inspired by Anderson’s cross-disciplinary move into political theory will find much to admire in the work of the late Iris Marion Young who, in books such as *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1990), *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1997), and *Inclusion and Democracy* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2000), envisioned proceduralist projects inflected by thinkers such as Theodor Adorno, Luce Irigaray, and Emmanuel Levinas. Anderson herself commends Nancy Fraser’s “provocative” work on recognition but disputes what she sees as Fraser’s insistence that “a transformative politics of redistribution” take “absolute political precedence” over communicative projects. I think that for many scholars (myself included), the reluctance to embrace Habermas has been predicated partly on a belief, like Fraser’s, that “a truly pluralized public sphere can only be enacted in conditions of social and economic parity” (pp. 44–45; p. 45, n. 23). To be sure, the full utopian promise of communicative ethics explicitly requires this radical socioeconomic change; nonetheless, the focus on theorizing an
ideal situation that cannot yet exist may strike some as a rather speculative project. That said, the relation between the ethical and political dimensions of Habermas's wide-ranging thought is open to interpretation. Thus, Fredric Jameson has recently contrasted Habermas's "unfinished" Enlightenment project to the laissez-faire tendencies of neoliberalism. As against the neoliberal view that "modernity" is simply found in capitalism's ongoing globalization, Jameson sees Habermas as insisting that it must be made through concerted politics (see Jameson, A Singular Modernity: Essays on the Ontology of the Present [London and New York: Verso, 2002]).

Of course, though Anderson's declared focus is the ethical turn, animated political practice is clearly central to the proceduralist ethos that she describes. However one decides on these questions, Anderson's work in political theory, like her exploration of Victorian cosmopolitanism, offers critics of nineteenth-century literature the opportunity to revisit the modern project. In doing so, Anderson invites us to inhabit an ethos that The Way We Argue Now richly exemplifies: wary of characterological presumption, able to specify the norms that motivate us, willing to engage in self-critique, and always, always ready to argue.

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